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Recharge
your life

LIVE MORE IN
THE MOMENT

RECONNECT
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Advice on how to get your eight hours a night

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SIMPLE WAYS TO SAVE OUR PLANET

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DEVELOP A POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

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WELCOME

Stopping to think about the here and now is essential for switching off, recharging the batteries, and living a happier, healthier, calmer life. It's all too easy to get caught up in the busyness of our everyday lives and the demands placed upon us, whether by family members, friends, colleagues or clients. In a world where we have to juggle a multitude of responsibilities, cope with various pressures of modern living, and manage the intrusive nature of today's technology, it's more important than ever before to take a step back from it all. Learn how to truly notice the natural world around you and become more mindful of the environment; swap your smartphone for a paintbrush once in a while to explore your creative side; and find ways to nurture your mind and body. Offering advice, inspiration and ideas on all these things and more, *Recharge Your Life* will ensure you start living more mindfully today.

FUTURE

Recharge *your life*

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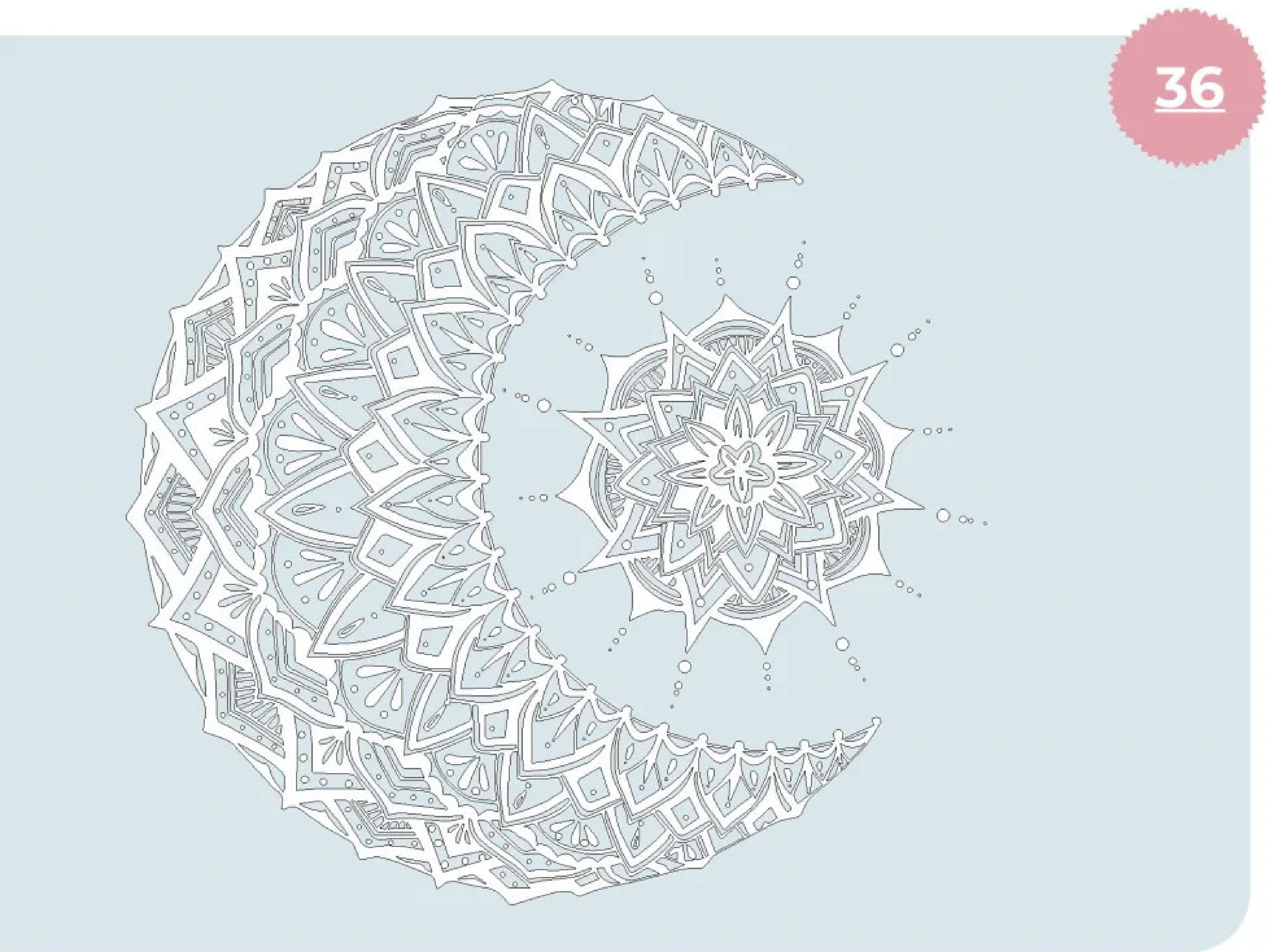

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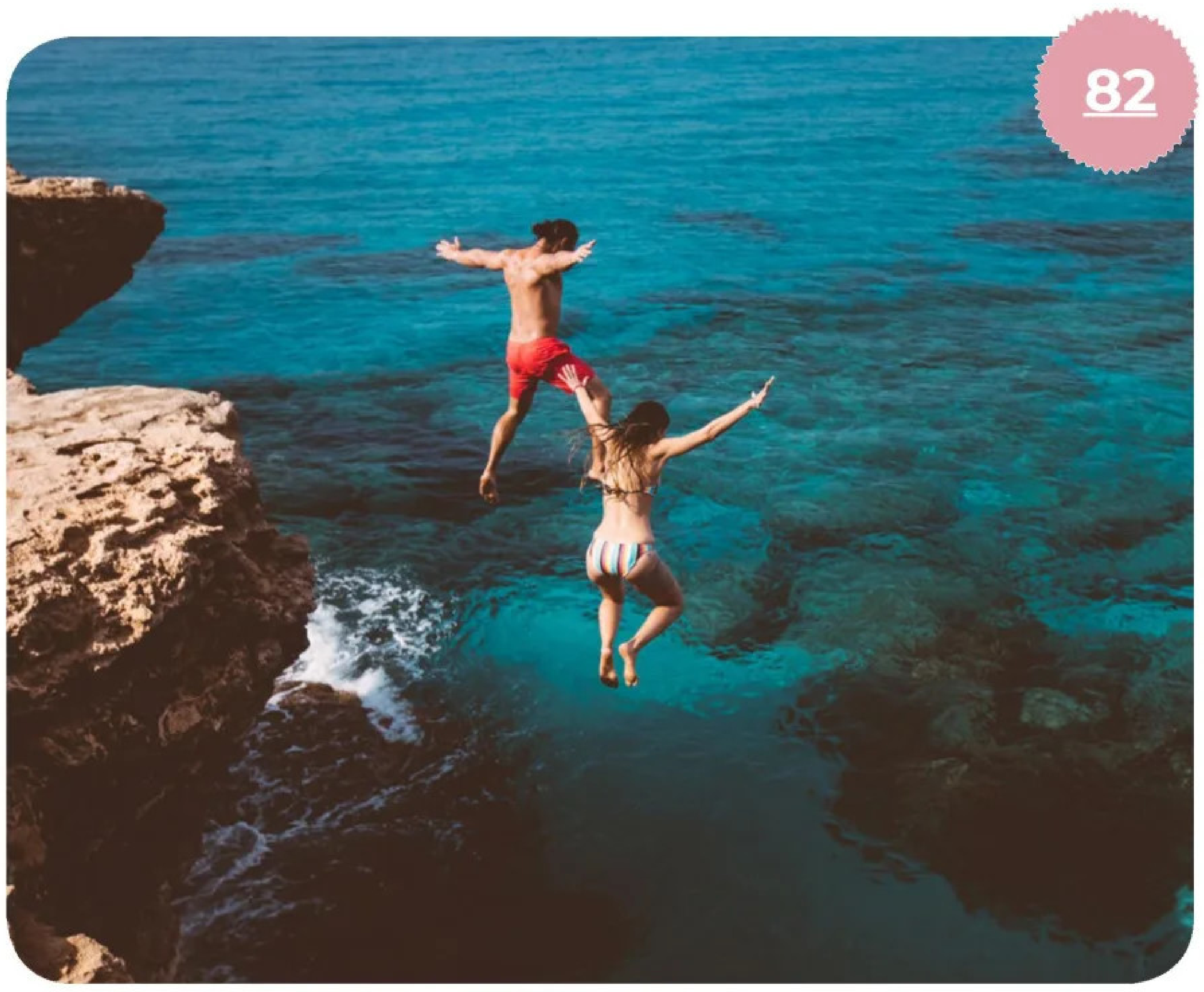

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"People don't take trips, trips take people"
- JOHN STEINBECK -

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TAKE BETTER CARE
OF YOURSELF

LEARN TO LIVE
IN THE MOMENT

EXPLORE YOUR
CREATIVE SIDE

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Mind & Body

"When mind, body, and spirit are in harmony, happiness is the natural result"

– DEEPAK CHOPRA –

Develop a positive body image

How do you feel about your body? Transformational coach Alison Morgan uncovers the power of gaining a fresh perspective of yourself

Our bodies are truly amazing. Carrying us, keeping us alive, creating new life, healing wounds… the list goes on. But these are all things we tend to take for granted and, as amazing as we are, we often struggle to see ourselves in a positive light.

In a social-media-frenzied world, often showing the 'perfect' life or body, having a positive image about our own bodies seems to be increasingly challenging. In one click, it's easy to be thrown into a scenario of comparing ourselves with others and wishing we had the perfect legs, bum or lips (take your pick!), and if we're not careful, it can lead to a downward spiral of self-loathing, low confidence and a negative body image, which can impact all areas of our lives.

As much as we know it's healthy and important for us to have a positive view of our own body, many of us struggle with this daily act of self-acceptance and compassion. So how would life be different if we liked or even loved our bodies a little bit more, and how can we achieve this?

WHAT DOES A 'POSITIVE BODY IMAGE' REALLY MEAN?

We all see things in different ways, and the concept of a 'positive body image' is no different. It's about how you perceive yourself. Think of it as:

- *How you **see** your body*
- *How you **feel** about your body*
- *The **thoughts** you have about your body*
- *The **things you do** that result from this self-perception*

Think about how you perceive yourself on a scale of 0-10, rather than simply seeing yourself either positively or negatively. This will probably change on a weekly, daily and even hourly basis due to things happening around you, but the more you start to become aware of how you're feeling about yourself, the better placed you are to take action to move the scale towards confidence, more of the time. Think baby steps more frequently, rather than giant leaps less often.

This isn't about seeing yourself as perfect – perfect doesn't exist. It's also not a destination that you get to and stay at. It's an ongoing work in progress, much like physical fitness; it's something that needs regular attention to make lasting differences and for you to feel more comfortable in your own skin.

TO LOVE OR TO LOATHE?

We only get one body to carry us through our lives. It's the only thing that you will spend your whole life with, and you have a choice: look after it, nourish it and learn to love it, or waste precious time and energy loathing it, beating yourself up and comparing yourself to others. You wouldn't say negative things to your friends, so why say them to yourself?

True, long-lasting, deep confidence and a healthy perception of your body comes from within. It comes from you accepting yourself, treating yourself kindly, working on being a healthier you, and having positive opinions and beliefs about yourself. It's always lovely to receive compliments from people, but you can't live off these forever. They should be nice to have, not necessary to have.

Living with a negative body image can drain us, control us, and steal our happiness and enthusiasm for living life.

Improving your attitude towards yourself may just turn up your happiness dial. It might not be an easy journey, but wonderful things will happen if you give it a go! What have you got to lose?

A MORE POSITIVE MINDSET

Being more positive about ourselves more of the time sounds simple, but in reality it can take some work and commitment. Here are some simple areas to start thinking about:

- **Develop a healthy attitude towards yourself**

Developing a healthy, positive attitude towards yourself as a whole, complete human being may mean a shift in mindset, but it is completely achievable.

BODY
Positive

Nothing positive comes from a negative mindset, and the sooner you start practising this through making small shifts, the sooner you will feel the benefits. Everything is in your power to change; you simply need to believe in yourself.

- **Explore your thoughts and feelings about your body**

Learning to shake off negative beliefs and opinions about yourself may help you move towards a place of acceptance and respect for your body. Learning to tune in to the thoughts that chatter away in our heads, and learning to have the courage to face the negative ones rather than avoid them, is an important stage in the healing process.

- **Take action that works for you**

On your journey to becoming more positive about your body image, you'll find the things that work best for you. Face the challenge with a learning mindset and be comfortable with taking action and trying new things. Stick with them and build up your toolkit, so when you feel your confidence slipping, you know what tool to pull out!

PUT IT INTO ACTION

How often have you thought: 'When I lose this weight, I'll be more confident and happy'? Yes, you might be, but often the effect is short-lived. You're then looking for the next thing and the next. The trick is to start working on your body confidence now, and that starts with your mindset and becoming healthier and stronger physically and mentally at the same time.

Ready to get started? Begin with these simple actions...

Develop a healthy attitude towards yourself:

- *Accept yourself as the unique individual you are today. Don't let your mind wander back to the past or dream about the future. Practising mindfulness will help train your brain to be more focused on the present and reduce this time travel of your mind.*

- *Focus on your own journey, rather than wasting time comparing yourself to others. You will never be them.*

- *Don't be mean, critical or judgemental to anyone – including yourself! Be kind, supportive and show compassion.*

- *Work to improve yourself, but don't strive for perfection. Enjoy the journey you're on, learning what works for you, and be proud of every small achievement you make towards a healthier, stronger, more positive version of you.*

- *Respect yourself and all that your body has taken you through so far in life. Write down three things you're grateful to your body for each day.*

- *Put yourself first – develop a great relationship with yourself. If you don't, it's harder to have effective relationships with others.*

- *Be so proud of yourself; you don't need compliments to make yourself feel better.*

Explore your thoughts and feelings about your body:

- *Be curious about how you honestly feel about yourself, and try to go beyond 'I don't like my body'. Try closing your eyes and slowly focusing on each part of your body and see what thoughts, feelings and emotions arise.*

- *Dig deep and try to understand why you feel that way. Can you link it back to something that happened in your past?*

- *Develop the ability to tune in to the thoughts that regularly chatter away in your mind. Try keeping a journal to capture how you feel about your body daily. Notice any themes and things that trigger you to feel worse or better.*

- *Notice when your mind wanders through the day to thoughts about your body. When you notice this has happened, try to focus back on the present moment, whatever you are doing, or your breathing.*

- *We sometimes avoid thoughts that are uncomfortable or painful. Learn to observe them and how they make you feel. This isn't about solving them, but exploring them may bring new insight and reduce their power.*

***Take action that works for you*:**

It may require a bit of time, trial and error to find what works for you, but it's worth it. Building a personal toolkit of exercises to use when your thoughts are slipping to the negative will keep you on track to having a positive body image.

The long-term change will come from the internal work you do, but there's also fun stuff, like wearing great clothes that flatter you, treating yourself to a facial, or just spending time with loved ones. Have fun with it all and remember that true beauty is much more than skin deep.

© Getty Images

Write down all the things you love about your body

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Natural beauties

Sara Niven proves that we can pamper ourselves while protecting the planet, and don't need a bathroom shelf full of chemicals to look, smell or feel great

Gone are the days when adopting a natural beauty regime meant ineffective formulations, a poor choice of products and drab packaging. There's now a multitude of brilliant ranges and companies, not only committed to cruelty free but with a wide range of other ethical considerations as well, from recycling and vegan formulations to helping charity. Here are some to get you started.

NEAL'S YARD REMEDIES
COVENT GARDEN
Bee Lovely
BATH & SHOWER GEL
HELP SAVE THE BEES

Bee Lovely Bath & Shower Gel

Neal's Yard Remedies

NYR launched its Save The Bees campaign in 2011, and purchases from its Bee Lovely range help support numerous bee-related charities. From a skincare perspective, the natural formulation contains fair-trade organic honey for a gentle, moisturising cleanse, while the blue bottle is made from 100% recycled material.

Natural Infusion Matte Moisturising Lipstick

Beauty Without Cruelty

As lipstick wearers end up ingesting some of the product, it makes sense to consider ingredients. Unlike many other natural formulations, this lipstick is beeswax free and vegan. With a 40% jojoba oil content and vitamin E, it also moisturises and there's a great choice of shades besides this flattering nude.

WELEDA
Aknedoron
Purifying Lotion

Aknedoron Purifying Lotion

Weleda

With some anti-blemish products carrying warnings they are capable of bleaching clothing, take a gentler approach with this product from a company with some fantastic ethical certifications, including NATRUE. The vegan-friendly formulation features natural essential oils including sage, thyme and lavender, along with astringent witch hazel and sulphur.

CACA NOIR
HENNA HAIR COLOUR
LUSH
e325g

Henna Hair Colour

Lush

Synthetic dyes contain numerous chemicals, with p-Phenylenediamine (PPD) seen as causing most allergic reactions. Even if that isn't a concern, synthetic dyes penetrate skin, entering your system whereas natural henna like the range from Lush, stain the outside of each individual hair before gradually fading.

Nail Polish

Zoya

Zoya's vegan-friendly natural nail polishes are promoted as BIG10FREE and were the first to be formulated without chemicals including formaldehyde, a known carcinogen, and Xylene, which can cause irritation to the skin and eyes. It also has amazing shades to choose from, including the new Innocence range, pictured.

Moisturising Shampoo

Green People

Many shampoos contain sodium lauryl sulphate, a foaming agent found in detergents that makes the product lather up but can cause irritation and strip natural oils; the last thing you need if your hair is dry. This certified organic version is SLS free and contains vitamin B and aloe vera.

Body Scrub

UpCircle

Scrubs immediately improved their image after plastic microbeads were banned (in the UK) in 2018, but UpCircle's vegan scrub goes much further in the eco stakes. Repurposed coffee grounds blended with shea butter and citrus oils create a highly effective exfoliator that also helps save coffee-shop waste from landfill.

Natural Soap

Lucy Bee

Unlike most soaps, Lucy Bee's formulations are entirely free from palm oil for environmental reasons (the company has chosen to avoid using even sustainable palm oil). Instead, its bars are made from extra virgin fair trade organic raw coconut oil, with organic essential oils replacing artificial fragrances.

Sea Buckthorn 24h Roll-On Deodorant

Weleda

An ethical swap for both skin and the environment, Weleda's roll-on deodorants are NATRUE certified with natural antimicrobials to inhibit bacteria, and no aluminium salts. Vegan-friendly, they come packaged in recycled HDPE bottles made from plastic milk containers, which can be recycled again.

Loose Organic Mineral Foundation

Inika

A good foundation is a beauty essential, but the brand you choose could mean unknowingly supporting animal testing if it's among the companies still exporting to China, where that's obligatory. Inika's certified vegan, 100% naturally derived mineral foundation is SPF 25, as well as being completely cruelty free.

Top 5 essential oils

From lemon to lavender there is no denying that essential oils have some incredible benefits for the mind and the body

Traditionally, essential oils have been used by aromatherapy professionals. However, in the recent shift towards home remedies and wellness, people are turning towards essential oils in their daily routine as a way of nurturing their bodies and resetting their minds. There are multiple ways of using essential oils, from topical (applying onto the skin) to aromatic and to internal ingestion. Essential oils have many emotional and physical effects on the body and the mind but it can be tricky knowing where to start, so we've collated five essential oils that are perfect for any novice.

LEMON

This multi-purpose oil is popular for many reasons but one of the key uses is its healing properties. When taken internally it can be great for digestion and fighting seasonal respiratory infections such as the common cold. Dilute one to two drops in a water bottle for an energising start to the day and to boost immunity. It's a powerful non-toxic cleaner in the home and can be mixed with a few drops of olive oil to form a great polish for wooden surfaces.

TEA TREE

Tea tree derives from the Melaleuca alternifolia, a small tree native to Australia, and is commonly used to treat problematic skin. However, if you are looking to use tea tree on your skin, be sure to mix it with a carrier oil, as the pure essential oil can actually irritate skin. Tea tree oil also contains a number of compounds, in particular terpinen-4-ol, which is found in many hand sanitisers, and has been known to kill certain bacteria and viruses, including E. coli.

LAVENDER

When mixed with body lotion, lavender helps the mind to unwind and de-stress after a long day. Lavender is often considered a vital oil due to its calming properties, and was once used by the Egyptians and Romans for cooking, relaxation and bathing. This wonder oil can also be taken internally to calm nerves and anxiety. Trouble sleeping? Add a drop to your pillow and massage into the soles of your feet for a restful slumber.

EUCALYPTUS

The perfect essential oil to clear the mind, promote breathing and aid relaxation. The main chemical components in eucalyptus, alpha-terpineol and eucalyptol, help to open up airways as well as purify the air. When paired with lemon and peppermint oil in a spray bottle, eucalyptus provides a great natural solution to wipe down surfaces in your kitchen and bathroom. Alternatively, put a few drops in body lotion to aid with relaxation in the evenings.

Peppermint

PEPPERMINT

This essential oil has been used for centuries to aid digestion and ease the symptoms involved with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). In fact, in the last decade, the NHS has given it recognition as being a key natural remedy for IBS. Peppermint oil is also great when used externally on the body for stress. Apply the oil to the temples and other pulse points to promote focus and boost energy levels.

Eucalyptus

© Getty Images

"The natural
healing force
within each one of
us is the greatest
force in getting well"

- HIPPOCRATES -

Gratitude & wellbeing

Julie Bassett explains how the simple act of focusing on the positives in your life can have a huge impact on your physical and mental wellbeing

Sometimes life has a habit of getting you down. There's no need to feel bad – it happens to us all from time to time. The everyday routine can become mundane, and we can feel so busy that time seems to fly by without anything really seeming to happen. It can be hard to look at the positives in your life, but there are real benefits, both physical and mental, if you take the time to harness the power of gratitude.

Recognising things and people in your life that you're grateful for can have a huge impact on your wellbeing. "Being grateful for people, things and situations in our lives can create a balanced view in our mindset and lead us to experience the abundance in our lives, rather than feeling closed, deprived and constantly striving to better our lives," explains clinical psychologist Dr Sarah Maynard (**www.wildandpreciousminds.com**). "Learning to feel grateful shows us what there is to appreciate and be thankful for in our lives right now, and can create a sense of contentment and fulfilment, without actually changing anything. This in turn can be something that lowers our stress levels and affects us physically."

This feeling of gratefulness can impact different areas in your life. For example, instead of constantly focusing on what you don't like about your body, remind yourself what it can do from a non-aesthetic perspective. You might be grateful to your body for enabling you to walk along the beach, bend down to pick up a child, or take part in an exercise class. By turning your attention to these positives, you are far more likely to feel motivated to look after your body through exercise, healthy eating and mindfulness.

BARRIERS TO GRATITUDE

It can be difficult to show gratitude in our lives if it's something that's new to us. It's not uncommon to be stuck in a negative mindset, always seeing the downside and struggling to embrace the good. So, what can we do to begin introducing gratitude into our daily lives? Dr Maynard says: "The best way to develop a gratitude habit is to practise little and often. This helps build the neural pathways in our brain so the habit becomes more automatic. A great exercise is the 'ten-finger gratitude practice' (finding something we are grateful for, for each finger), which stretches our thinking so we realise how much there is around us to be grateful for, both the big stuff and the small stuff."

Give it a try and see if you can isolate those first ten things that you're grateful for in your life right now. If you find it difficult, you're not alone. Dr Maynard explains that there is a psychological reason why this happens: "The brain is typically able to hold on to negative thoughts (so-called 'velcro thoughts') because it determines that these may be important to our survival, whereas positive thoughts (including areas like gratitude) are so-called 'teflon thoughts' because they more easily slip right out of our minds and off our radar unless they are consciously practised."

There are barriers to overcome to embrace a life of gratitude. Dr Maynard says that when we're in a negative mindset, "it's easy to convince ourselves there is nothing good in our lives worth being grateful for, or anything significant to include." This is limiting our ability to show gratitude and it takes practise to let go of this negativity: "If we buy into this thought, we stay stuck. If we get a bit of distance from this thought and recognise 'this is just a thought', we become free to look for things we are grateful for, regardless of whether such thoughts are present or not."

START TO FEEL GRATEFUL

If you would like to introduce gratitude into your life, Dr Maynard has some tips: "Look around you; there is always something to be grateful for. Maybe it's simply the fact we are alive. Anything or

"Be thankful for what you
have; you'll end up having
more. If you concentrate
on what you don't
have, you will never,
ever have enough "

- OPRAH WINFREY -

anyone that brings pleasure and wonder into your life, be it the blue sky, or your committed partner, can be something to be grateful for."

Once you start consciously seeking things you are grateful for, you suddenly start to realise how much good there is around you. It can be worth starting a gratitude diary (see the box below) to list the things you are grateful for each day.

There are so many benefits to being grateful. Those who practise gratitude daily might experience better sleep – one technique is to run through the things you are grateful for or everything that was good about your day just before you go to sleep. This puts you in a positive mindset for a good night's sleep, so you can wake up feeling refreshed and ready to face a new day.

As you practise gratitude daily and start to feel the benefits, pass it on by showing your gratitude towards others. "Demonstrating and voicing gratitude towards others can take them by surprise!" says Dr Maynard. "However, it opens up the opportunity to show others how much we value them, and in turn cultivate a more reciprocal exchange of appreciation towards each other. Being grateful also creates a ripple effect; if someone has been the recipient of gratitude, they may be more likely to pass this on in their interactions with others." Whether it's through writing letters, sending flowers or a verbal expression of appreciation, it's well worth sharing your gratitude.

Make today the first day you consciously show gratitude for the good things and people in your life, and see how it impacts on your wellbeing.

Keep a gratitude diary

A gratitude diary is a great way of helping you to focus on the things you are grateful for. There is no set format for you to start a diary, though there are some you can buy with handy headers and ideas to prompt your thoughts. All you really need, though, is five minutes a day with a notepad and pen.

You really should try and write in your gratitude diary every day, which helps to establish a good habit. Write down anything good that happens in your day. You could carry it with you and journal something as soon as it happens, or you could make it a regular part of your pre-bedtime routine.

There is no limit to the things you can cover. Did you have a nice walk into work? Write it down. Did you manage a task for the first time? Write it down. It can be big things and small things. A gratitude diary is only for noting down the positives, to build up a resource that you can pull out whenever you feel down so you can look back on all the good things that have happened to you.

If you prefer a more structured approach, you could work to a set format in your gratitude diary. You could list five things that you were grateful for today, one person you were grateful for today, and one personal skill you were grateful for today. This can really help to streamline your thoughts, if that's how you work.

The key thing to remember is that this is purely personal – it is what *you* are grateful for. What makes you happy is very individual, and your diary is a reflection of that.

© Getty Images

> Once you consciously seek things you are grateful for, you realise how much good there is around you

Write down all the things you are grateful for

Yoga for all

Laurie Newman chats to One For All Hot Yoga studio and learns why yoga studios are a safe and inviting place to restore the body and replenish the soul

In 2018, One For All Hot Yoga opened its doors to the people of Bournemouth, nestled in the heart of the UK's south-coast town. This aptly named studio believes in the idea that yoga should be inviting to all. The owners, Lucy and Jesse Ward, who met in Melbourne, Australia, flew back to their home turf in the UK to build their dream of opening their own studio. Laurie Newman caught up with them for a chat about why hot yoga is great for the mind, flexibility and strength; why community is at the core of their studio; and why you should give it a go!

Q At One For All you teach mainly hot yoga classes. How does hot yoga differ from normal yoga? What are its key benefits for the body and mind?

A We love the term 'normal yoga' but yes, hot yoga is a little different. The studio is heated to 38 degrees Celsius with infrared panels like you might find in a maternity ward. We add humidity to raise the heat index so the room feels hotter. The sequences change weekly depending on the teacher or the time of year (or even the phase of the moon), and we practise to music. There's chanting, and the teachers often provide hands-on adjustments. The heat helps to raise the heart rate so the practice becomes an efficient cardio workout as well as developing strength and flexibility. It also encourages the release of hormones in the body that help soften through the myofascial system, and you sweat heaps, which is cleansing and detoxifying. Finally, it helps with the breath (or prāṇāyāma), and focuses the mind on your practice so you get that wonderful sense of clarity after class.

Q What's the best part about being a yoga teacher and having your own studio to teach in? Has it always been a dream of yours?

A As soon as we started practising, we wanted to teach, and as soon as we started teaching, we wanted to open our own place. Teaching is so rewarding and doing it full time, in a beautiful studio we put together as a family, with the wonderful, dedicated yogis of Bournemouth, we just feel so lucky.

Q Having been to your studio, your students often talk about the community One For All has. Why is community at the heart of your studio?

A We've practised all over the place; in posh studios, gyms, living rooms, pubs, and what makes you fall in love with a studio are the people, the teachers, the students, being welcomed whoever you are, wherever you are on your yoga journey. Nothing makes us happier than seeing two of our students leave the studio together chatting about some common interest. We want people to feel good about coming here, have a great practice and feel good afterwards.

Q People who are new to yoga can find it intimidating going to their first class. They may be put off by the fact they feel unflexible and they can't touch their toes. What piece of advice can you give to people starting yoga for the first time?

A It's so daunting attending your first class; even just going to a new studio can be pretty scary. The three things we always try to communicate to our new students are: 1. Don't worry – everyone here with you has been in the same boat as you, maybe last week, maybe several decades ago, but everyone had to have their first class. 2. Try to leave your expectations at the door and embrace the new experience – it's going to be tough, but fun and super rewarding. 3. Finally, if it doesn't feel good, don't do it. Take your time; you don't need to do every posture or every vinyāsa – just do your own practice.

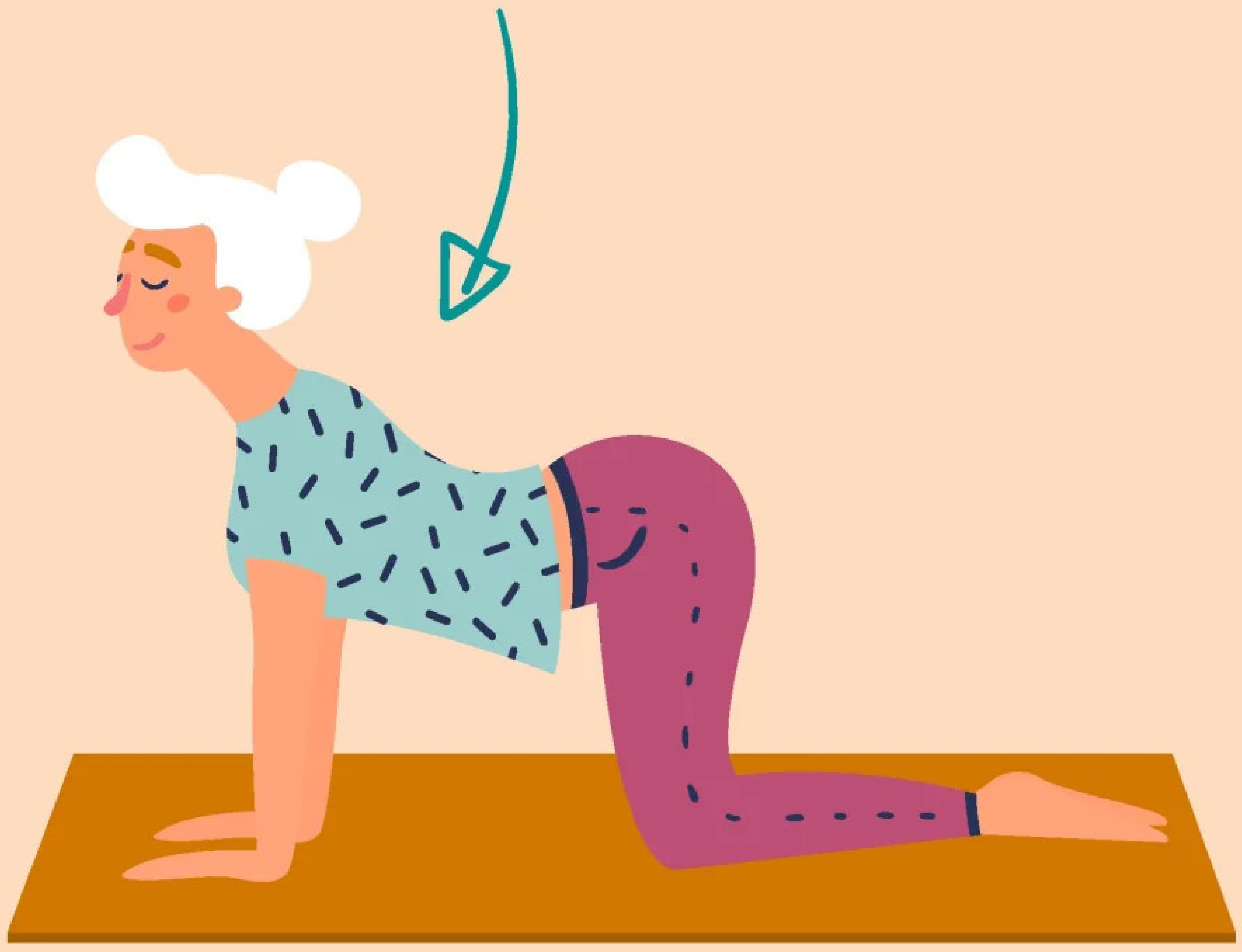
© Norbert Robert; Thinkstock

Get in touch

One For All Hot Yoga
oneforallhotyoga
W oneforallhotyoga.com

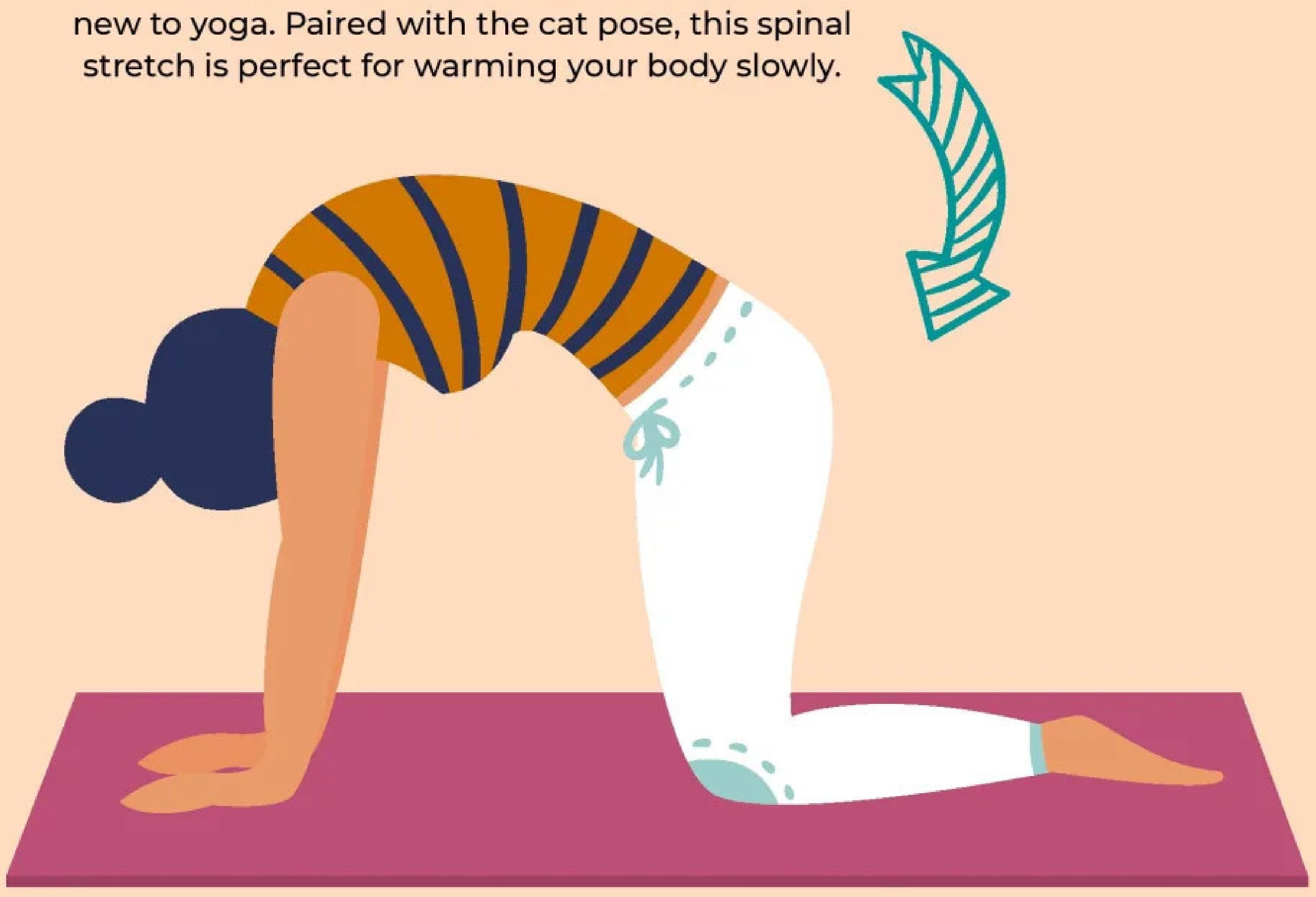
CAT OR *MARJAIASANA*

Great as a slow warm-up when you first reach your mat. This pose massages your internal organs and provides a steady stretch for the spine.



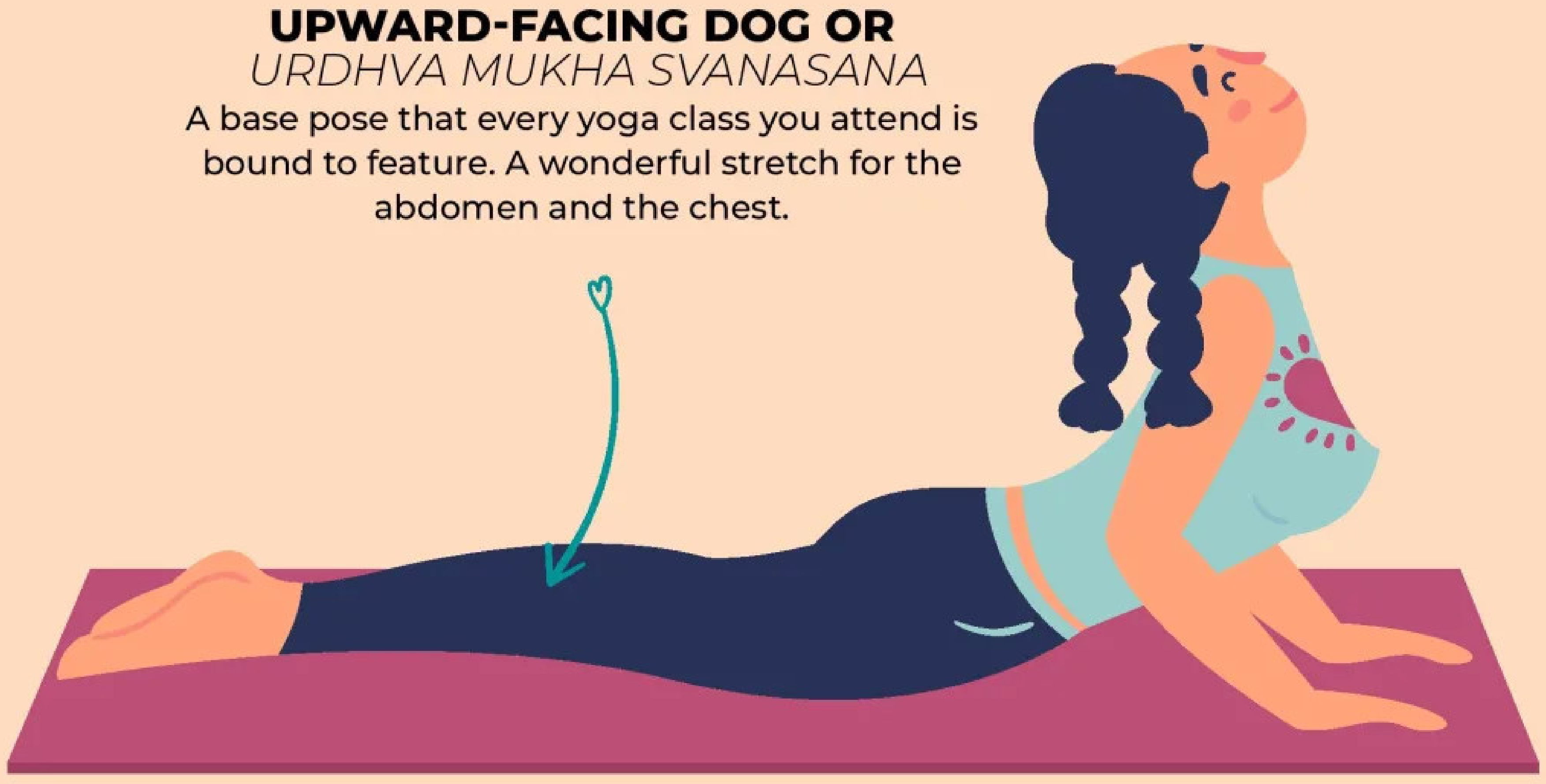
COW OR *BITILASANA*

An easy pose that is a great one to try if you are new to yoga. Paired with the cat pose, this spinal stretch is perfect for warming your body slowly.



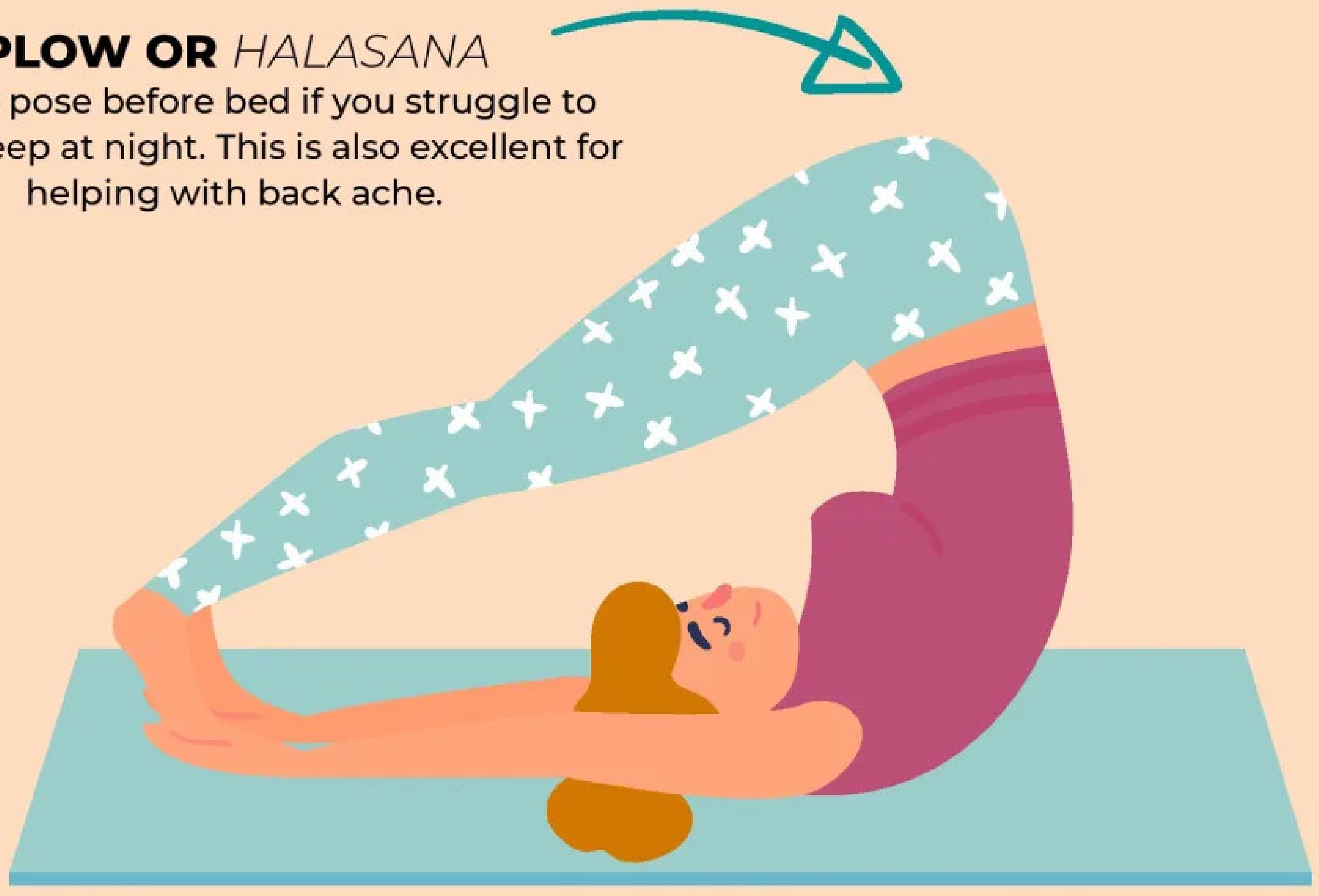
UPWARD-FACING DOG OR *URDHVA MUKHA SVANASANA*

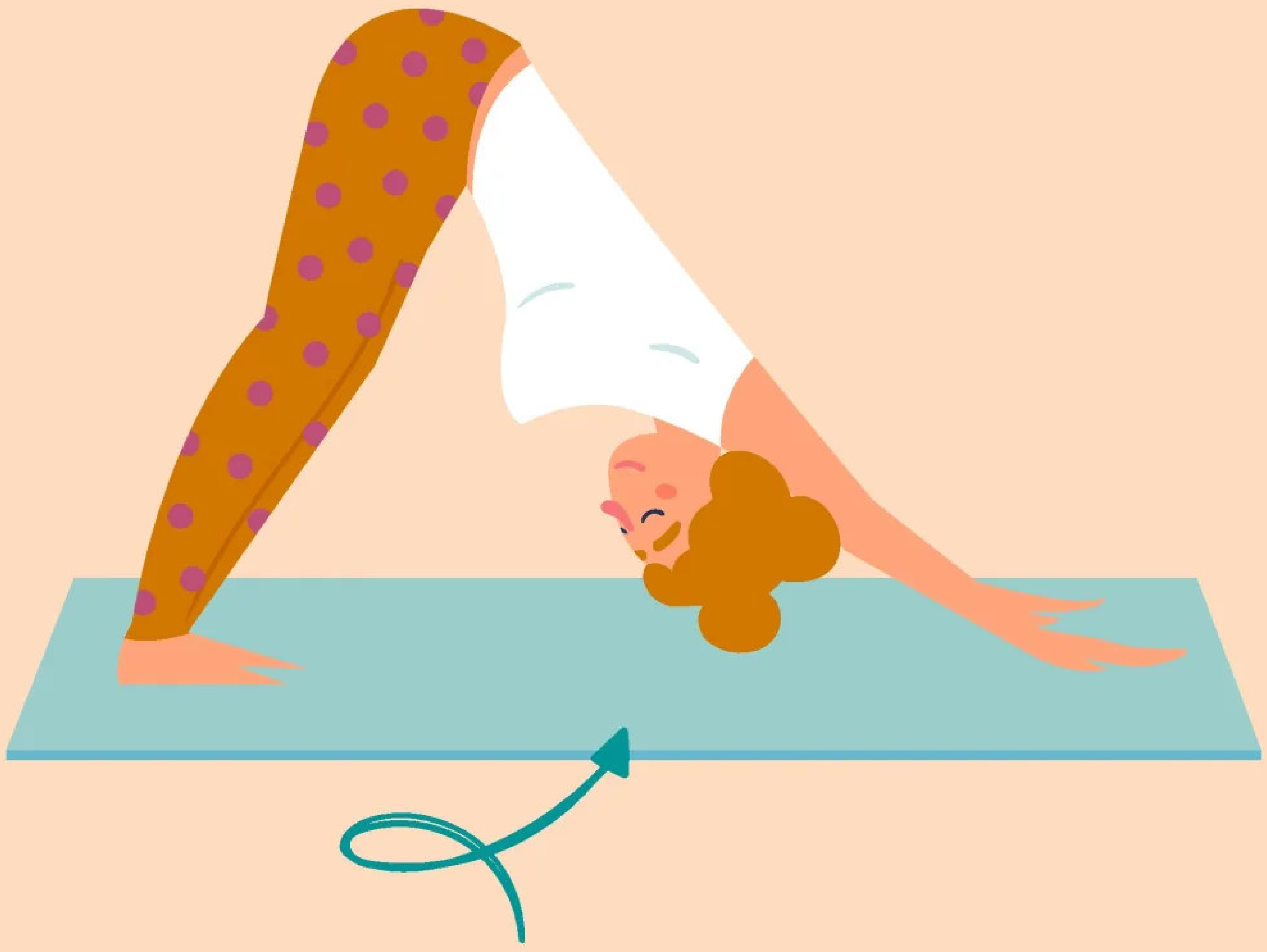
A base pose that every yoga class you attend is bound to feature. A wonderful stretch for the abdomen and the chest.



PLOW OR *HALASANA*

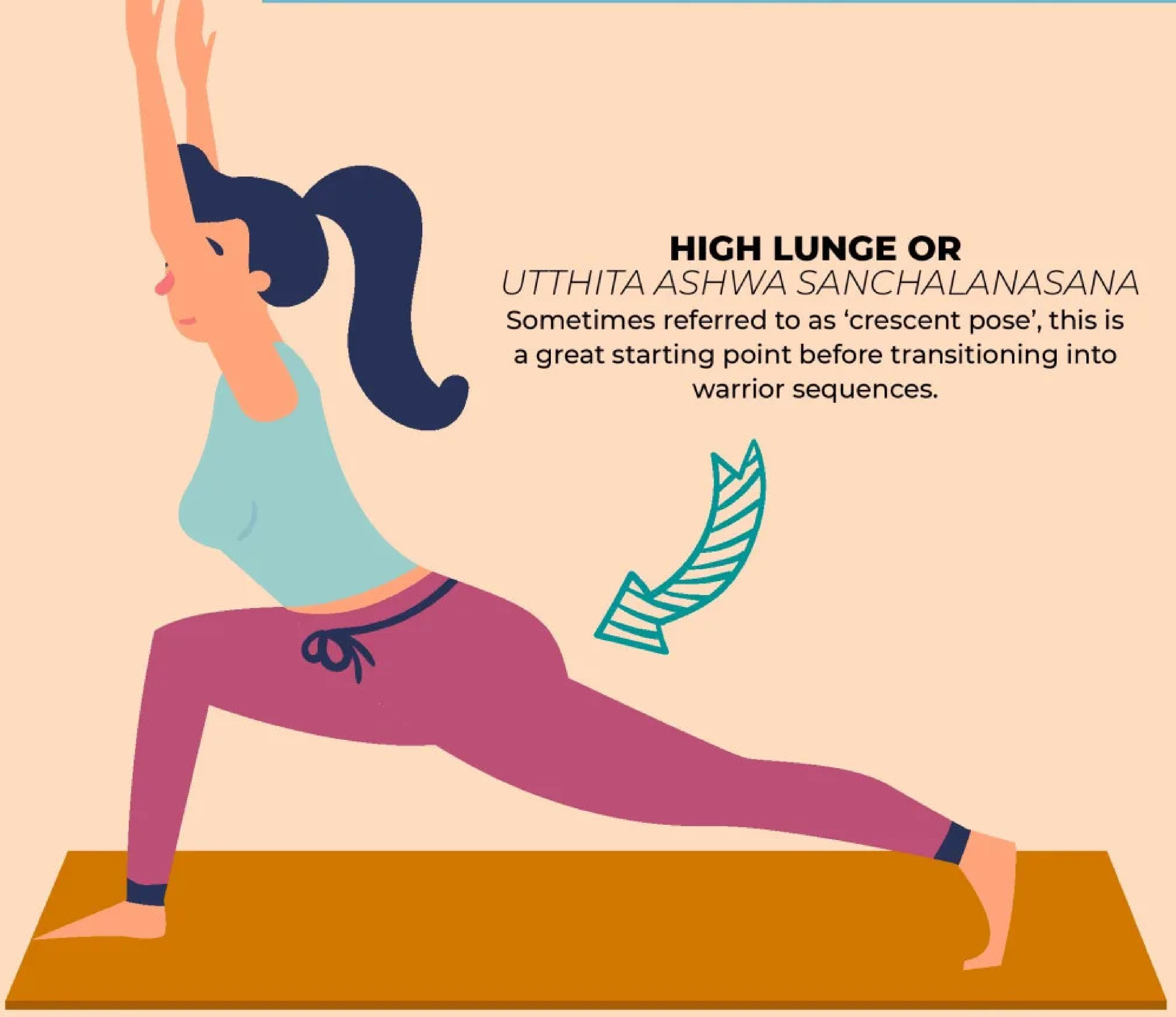
Try this pose before bed if you struggle to get to sleep at night. This is also excellent for helping with back ache.





DOWNWARD-FACING DOG OR *ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA*

A foundation pose that again any sequence is bound to feature. An energising and revitalising stretch for elongating the spine and strengthening hamstrings.



HIGH LUNGE OR *UTTHITA ASHWA SANCHALANASANA*

Sometimes referred to as ‘crescent pose’, this is a great starting point before transitioning into warrior sequences.

Living in the moment

Sarah Gane looks at ways to seek out the magic of the everyday

How often do you find yourself worrying about the future and ruminating on the past? It's safe to say most of us do this on a regular basis. Whether it's during a busy work day, before bed or at that weird time we wake up in the middle of the night; there's always something to plan for, overthink or worry about. It can occupy our minds, cloud our judgement and take up valuable time and energy in our lives.

FINDING CLARITY

Yet here's the thing: even when we've solved the issue (and even if that's by winning the lottery), it's guaranteed to bring with it a fresh set of troubles. As the talented Christopher 'Biggie' Wallace once said: "Mo' money, mo' problems." Wise words indeed. But, luckily for us, there is another way: by being present.

Despite it having become a bit of an overused phrase, living in the moment can actually help call time on all this back-and-forth musing that distracts us from what's important. It may sound daunting, but it really doesn't have to be. It's all about the little things, you see.

JUST BEGIN

If you're sitting down on a sofa or at a desk, close your eyes and take some slow, deep breaths through your nose and out through your mouth. Introduce some counting: take an inhale for seven counts and an exhale for 11 counts. Do this for a couple of minutes and see how you feel afterwards. Practising this technique regularly will mean you can return to this state if you feel yourself getting overwhelmed or caught in a cycle of negative thoughts and worries.

Another great way of 'pressing pause' and positively interrupting your day could be to make yourself a warm drink and simply sit with it. Herbal teas or coffee can be particularly good for this. Take a moment to consider a few things: what does it smell like? Can you feel the warmth on your hands? What does it taste like? What can you hear around you? What can you see?

BE THANKFUL

We've established that most people have no shortage of worries in their lives, so one way of living in the moment is to take a notebook – or the notes app on your phone if you don't have a pen to hand – and jot down the things that you're grateful for at this point in time. Struggling to know where to start? Think about the everyday basics that we can all take for granted: having a roof over your head, food to eat, clothes to wear and people in your life whom you care about. Maybe you saw a robin in the garden or a feather on your doormat, or you found a particularly shiny penny in your purse. Every little thing counts. Write it down and date the page.

NOTICE NATURE

Growing your own plants can also help you to focus on the here and now. Whether it's an allotment or a window box, tending to them enables us to get into the 'flow' state. It also reminds us that, despite our best efforts, some things just don't go to plan – and that's okay. Seeds might not germinate, creatures could eat our favourite crops, or we might experience unfavourable weather. These things happen and they're out of our control: what matters is that we are engaged with nature's seasons and cycles, not caught in a cloud of future or past thoughts.

© Pexels; Getty Images

GET IN THE WATER

Wild swimming or watersports like paddle boarding or kayaking are a great way of living in the moment. You *have* to pay attention to the weather, wind and waves as they could change at any moment. It has brilliant health benefits too. According to the Wild Swimming Community (**wildswimming.co.uk**), cold immersion can help with depression and muscle aches, and even boost the immune system.

BE YOURSELF

Social media and the consumerist society that we live in today can make us feel pressured to be, say and do certain things. How many of us have thought that our lives will be perfect when we lose weight, buy a [enter name of car/gadget/thing here], do a certain thing, or get a pay rise?

There's absolutely nothing wrong with having clearly defined goals and constructively reflecting on our progress through journaling or discussion – that's a completely normal, natural and really important part of the learning process – but constantly striving for improvement and, ultimately, perfection, means we take our eyes off the magic that's in front of us. It means we never really stop to enjoy what it is we actually have; instead, we're off chasing the next big thing. It can be exhausting.

TAKE A PICTURE

One positive use of our smartphones could be to explore photography a little. You could go off and discover parts of your own home or local area. Or, why not use it to document precious little moments from your day? You could choose to share them on social media as a form of microblogging or as part of a community challenge, such as #30daysofgratitude. You could even take it a step further and use printouts of them as part of your journaling practice – two mindful activities in one. Win-win!

TRY MEDITATION

Apps such as Headspace and Calm are great for building up stamina in this valuable skill. Rather than applying pressure to 'empty your mind' – a common mistake when people first start out – simply pay attention to the instructions and yourself, whether it's the rhythm of the breath or observing the thoughts popping up in your head. Start by dedicating five or ten minutes of your day to the practice and see where it leads.

GET CRAFTING

The benefits of making things from scratch are well-documented, chiefly because it enables you to focus on the task at hand. From pottery to crochet, sewing and knitting, there's something for everyone. You're giving yourself time to unwind, experiment and get your hands dirty. Meanwhile, attending a class or group locally opens up the possibility of face-to-face conversation, skill-sharing and connection with like-minded people. If you're short on time, why not try taking something with you on your commute to work, such as a small cross-stitch project, or freestyle with a crochet hook and ball of yarn? Readymade kits can also be great for this if you're a bit overwhelmed with ideas.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

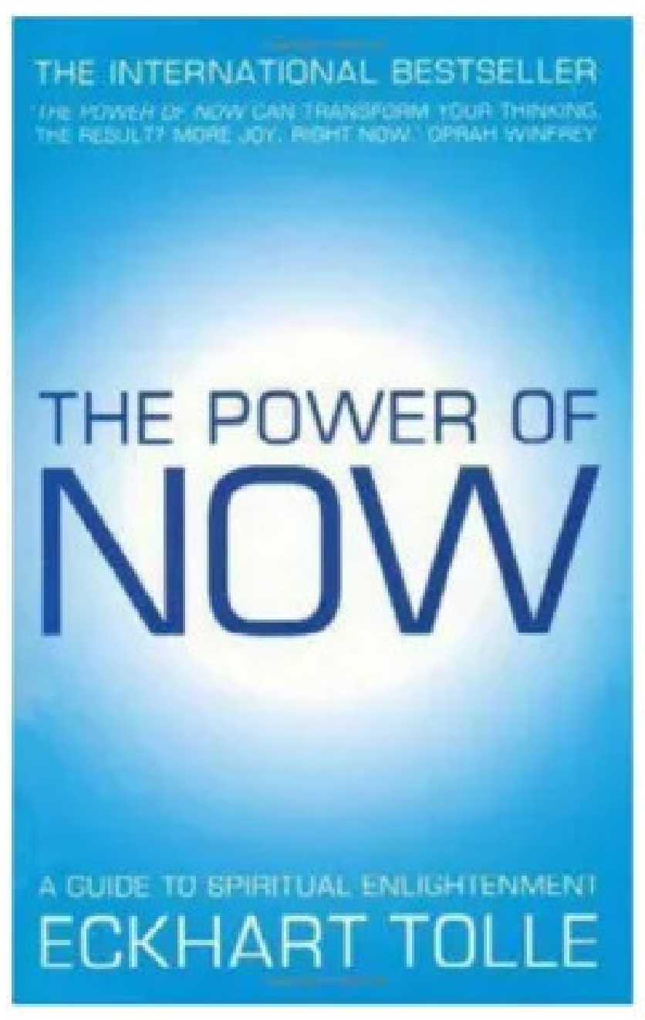
The next time you catch yourself in a cycle of worrying or planning your days away, gently take a step out of time to check in with your mind and body to see how you're doing. It can be as complicated or as easy as you want to make it – perhaps it's listening to the morning's birdsong, quite literally stopping to smell the coffee, or keeping your phone in your pocket to indulge in a bit of people-watching as you wait for the bus. Big holidays abroad and fancy things are nice, but they only happen once in a while and are not worth wishing your life away for. Stop and take a look around and you'll see that everything you ever need is right in front of you.

Keep learning

Read

The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle is a brilliant guide for more mindful living. "Realise deeply the present moment is all you have. Make the now the primary focus of your life."

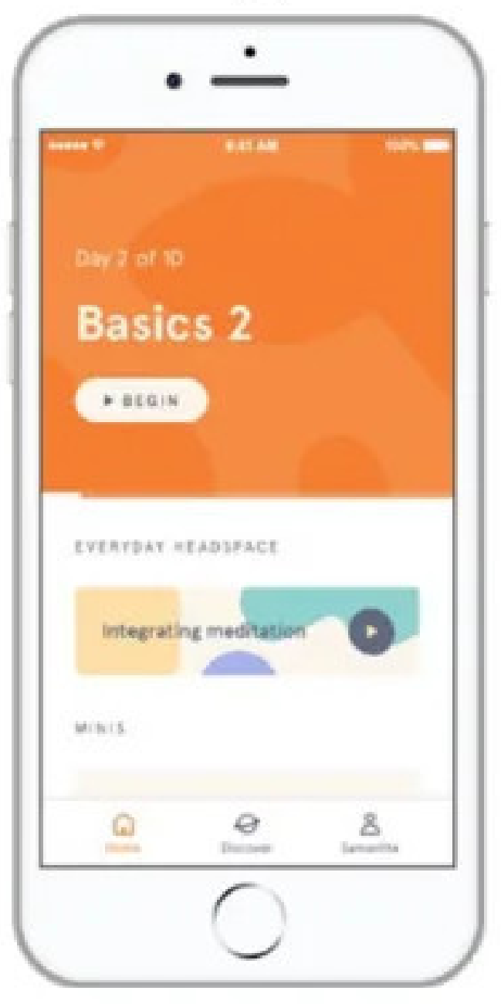
eckharttolle.com


THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER
'THE POWER OF NOW CAN TRANSFORM YOUR THINKING. THE RESULT? MORE JOY, RIGHT NOW.' OPRAH WINFREY
THE POWER OF NOW
A GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT
ECKHART TOLLE

Listen

Headspace is an accessible and enjoyable way to start meditating. Download the app or listen through Spotify. "Meditation is both a skill and an experience – a formal exercise to cultivate awareness and compassion."

headspace.com



Watch

Brené Brown's books and research are fantastic. Her latest special for Netflix – *The Call to Courage* – is a frank and open discussion about important topics for life, such as courage, vulnerability and gratitude.

"In the midst of great things, we literally dress rehearse tragedy. Instead, use that sensation as a reminder to be grateful. Practising gratitude lets us lean into joy."

brenebrown.com

A NETFLIX ORIGINAL SPECIAL
BRENÉ BROWN
the Call to Courage
APRIL 19 | NETFLIX
Author of Five #1 New York Times Bestsellers

> Constantly striving for perfection means we take our eyes off the magic in front of us

What matters is that we are engaged with nature's seasons and cycles

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Get energised

Fuel your body with nutritious smoothies packed with vitamins and antioxidants. Enjoy these six delicious recipes that will make you feel good inside and out

MEAN GREEN MACHINE

Enjoy a vibrant-green, low-sugar and naturally energising smoothie that will make you feel good. Tip 2 cups of fresh spinach and 1 cup of water into a blender, and blend until completely smooth – this ensures that your finished smoothie is beautifully bright-green. Now add in ½ cup mango, 1 frozen banana – make sure you chop it before you freeze it – 1 cup pineapple, ½ cup sliced avocado, 1 cup coconut milk and 2 tbsp of chia seeds into your blender, and blend until smooth. The chia seeds add extra nutrients and are delightfully energising.

BLACK FOREST DELIGHT

A thick, chocolatey drink isn't always associated with healthy notions, however this delicious chocolate cherry smoothie is low in calories and packed with antioxidants and plant-based proteins. Blend together 1 cup frozen cherries (without stones), 1 frozen banana, 2 tbsp raw cacao powder, 1 tbsp ground flax seed, 1 tsp cinnamon and 1 cup water. Garnish with mint leaves. The cherries complement and enhance the chocolatey flavour, which makes this smoothie taste decadent. However, you can enjoy it without feeling guilty, knowing it is good for you.

MATCHA TEA TROPIC

Enjoy a superfood powerhouse smoothie that's fruity with an earthy kick of tea. Blend together 1 cup coconut milk, 1 cup water, 1 frozen banana, 1 cup frozen pineapple, 1 tbsp matcha powder and ½ cup mango until smooth. This smoothie is absolutely packed with goodness. Matcha tea alone contains many antioxidants including the powerful EGCG, and has been proven to boost metabolism, burn calories, prevent disease and lower cholesterol and blood sugar. Matcha also calms and relaxes the body, enhances the mood and aids concentration.

BIG BLUE

This smoothie is full of vegetable goodness and healthy fats that will make you feel incredible. Blend together 2 peeled clementines, 1 ½ cups frozen cauliflower, 1 cup wild blueberries, 1 cup plain yoghurt, 2 tbsp peanut butter and ½ cup water. If you want an extra kick of iron and green power, add in a handful of spinach, although beware it will tint the colour a little. Don't be afraid of the odd addition of the cauliflower in this smoothie – it really works and is a great way to get some extra vegetables into your diet.

BERRY FRESH

Add another layer of taste to your berry-tastic smoothies with a hint of fresh mint. For this refreshing smoothie packed with antioxidants, blend together 1 cup almond milk, 1 cup coconut milk, 2 peeled kiwi fruits, 1 cup kale, 1 cup fresh mint leaves, 1 tsp vanilla, 2 cups frozen mixed berries and 1 cup Greek yoghurt. If you need a little bit of sweetness, add in a pinch of stevia. The fresh minty kick makes this the perfect summer smoothie to keep you feeling cool and energised in the warm mornings, and is great after an intense morning run. The good fats and vitamins will help to keep your body functioning at its best.

PRETTY IN PINK

Brighten up your morning and kick-start your day with this vibrant and super-tasty smoothie. Blend together 1 ½ cup frozen strawberries, 1 cup frozen raspberries, 1 peeled orange, 1 ½ cups coconut milk, 1 tbsp chia seeds, 2 medium chopped carrots and 1 small beetroot, peeled and cubed. This is a vitamin-C-packed smoothie with plenty of fibre, nutrients and natural plant-based protein. The beetroot not only enhances the colour of this drink, but it is also incredibly good for your liver.

Shopping list

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© Getty Images

Night, night, sleep tight

Struggling to drift off at night, or always waking up in the early hours? Jennifer Morgan is here to ensure you always get that elusive eight hours a night

You turn and look at each other on the sofa… why not? Just one more episode of *Killing Eve* or *Game of Thrones* won't hurt, will it? You know it's late, but there are no ads, so you'll be tucked up by oh, at least midnight. But deep down, you know that this nightly binging on box sets is having a major impact on your sleep.

A survey by The Sleep Council (**sleepcouncil.org**), found that while most adults need around seven to eight hours of sleep a night, a third of Brits are getting just five to six. A growing body of research suggests that mental and physical problems become more pronounced in those sleeping for less than six hours. That extra episode delaying your bedtime could amp up the fight or flight response to stress level, releasing hormones that speed up your heart rate and raise blood pressure.

"It's important to remember though," says Lisa Artis from The Sleep Council, "it's also about the quality of sleep you are getting, not the quantity (although we will spend a third of our lives in bed). If you are sleepy, exhausted and unable to function, then chances are you are not sleeping very well." Sometimes it can be hard to switch off (and not just the TV), with stress one of the most common causes of you lying there, staring at the ceiling. "If there's something playing on your mind, write it down," says Lisa, "whether that's worries or even a to-do list." Tech should be avoided before bed – in particular the hour before it. "The blue light that emits from devices messes around with your body's circadian rhythms by suppressing the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin in the brain, which is what we need in order to feel sleepy," says Lisa. "Bedrooms should be kept for sleep (and sex) only," says Dave Gibson, a health care practitioner, who specialises in helping those with sleep problems (**thesleepsite.co.uk**). "This is so the brain associates this room with getting to sleep. Smartphones and tablets should, as much as possible, be kept out. Try using a dawn simulator, which is a great way to wake up. Even if you do use your phone, avoid hitting the snooze button as it confuses the brain over when it's time to wake up. Just get out of bed and open the curtains to let in the daylight."

CONSIDER YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Your sleep environment is very important in getting the best night's sleep. Neither too hot or too cold, and as quiet and dark as possible. "Your bed needs to be comfortable," says Lisa. "It's difficult to get deep, restful sleep on one that's too hard, too soft, too small or too old." The Sleep Council recommends changing your new mattress every seven years, with research showing that swapping an uncomfortable one for a new one resulted in nearly an hour of extra sleep a night… just imagine that for a second!

Likewise, if you suffer with back and shoulder pain, look to your pillow. "A good pillow should hold your head in the correct alignment, in the same relation to your shoulders and spine as if you were standing upright with the correct posture," says Lisa. "Replace a pillow once it has lost its 'loft' (height), or it has become lumpy or discoloured." Dave adds that linens should be clean, cool and crisp, and ideally cotton, which helps skin to breathe, plus bedlinens should be changed once a week because we lose a half pint or more of fluid each night (yes, really).

MAKE A ROUTINE

It's not only children who benefit from a bedtime routine. Lisa advises finding ways of relaxing, such as a warm bath with soothing scents, background music, gentle stretches and yoga. "It's also important to establish a regular sleep pattern – going to bed and waking up at roughly the same time each day. Your body and mind will feel much better for it," she says. "Our brains like repetition," adds Dave, "a consistent sleep routine helps support and strengthen our body clocks."

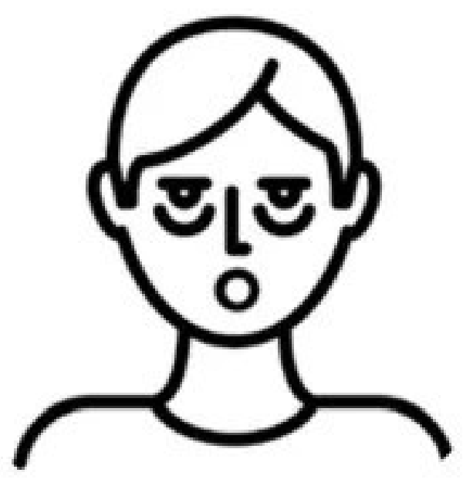
So you have your own bedtime routine – you're weaning yourself off more than

© Shutterstock

Sleep myths busted

Counting sheep

Counting sheep can help you fall asleep, but so can counting cows or dogs. It's the repetitive nature of the task that makes you feel sleepy. Absorption in a mental task is an aspect of mindfulness and can help to relax you.



Yawning

Yawning isn't always a sign you're tired. Sometimes we yawn when we wake up, we're bored or someone else does.

Alcohol

Drinking alcohol doesn't help you sleep. Too much, especially at night, plays havoc with your sleep patterns. It may help you fall asleep but will interrupt your sleep later on and rob you of one of the most satisfying types of sleep, where dreams occur.

© Getty Images

> Set your alarm for when you have to get up as you won't get quality zzzzs in between snoozes

one Netflix episode after 10pm; your bed is looking super-inviting; and you've cut back on caffeine and alcohol and other bad-sleep foods (incidentally, there's no evidence that cheese causes nightmares – it's actually a good bedtime snack thanks to the calcium, which is an amino acid the body uses to produce melatonin, the sleepy hormone, says the Sleep Council). But what if the other members of your household aren't quite on the same sleep-promotion page? If you're lying next to a snorer, what starts as a niggle, can become a major issue. "It's important to get it sorted," says Lisa, who recommends the British Snoring & Sleep Apnoea website (**britishsnoring.co.uk**) if earplugs aren't doing the trick. If you have a child disturbing your sleep, then try to get to the reason why – is it for comfort, a drink or a wee, or just because they know they can?

If you follow Lisa and Dave's advice, improved sleep can come to us all (hopefully), but when it does, just don't hit that snooze button. Set your alarm for when you actually have to get up as you won't get any quality zzzzs in between snoozes. Lisa even advises putting the alarm clock on the other side of the room, especially if you have a hard time not pressing the snooze button each day. "You'll have to walk across the room to turn it off, waking yourself up along the way," says Lisa. You'll be ready to start the day, as fresh as a daisy!

5 steps to...

sleep like a baby

One

Start a bedtime routine. This could include a bath, gentle stretches or reading a book.

Two

Get your sleep environment right. The ideal temperature is around 16˚C. Try to keep your room as dark as possible.

Three

Replace your mattress every seven years as advised by the Sleep Council. Test it before you buy (or take advantage of a no-quibbles return if buying online). Check your pillow still has its plumpness too.

Four

If you've been trying to get to sleep for more than 20 minutes, get out of bed and read a book under dim light until you feel sleepy, says Dave Gibson (**thesleepsite.co.uk**).

Five

Ditch the tech and avoid checking emails last thing at night or first thing in the morning. Swap your phone for an alarm clock.

"There is a time for many words, and there is also a time for sleep"

- HOMER -

Make your own

Lavender bags

A quick and easy craft project to help you relax and unwind

Lavender is an incredibly useful plant to have in your window box or garden. The name comes from the Latin word 'lavare', which means 'to wash', and the plant has long been used to treat ailments such as toothache, insect bites and minor burns. However, in addition to its beautiful smell, perhaps its most well-known benefit is its ability to help us to de-stress and sleep soundly.

According to research, lavender slows down the nervous system, decreasing your heart rate and blood pressure, helping you to fall asleep.

These little lavender bags are really quick to make, and ideal for popping under pillows, freshening up your wardrobe or drawers, or giving them as sweet little favours for bridesmaids. Simply scrunch every once in a while to release more of the fragrance.

1. CUT & PIN

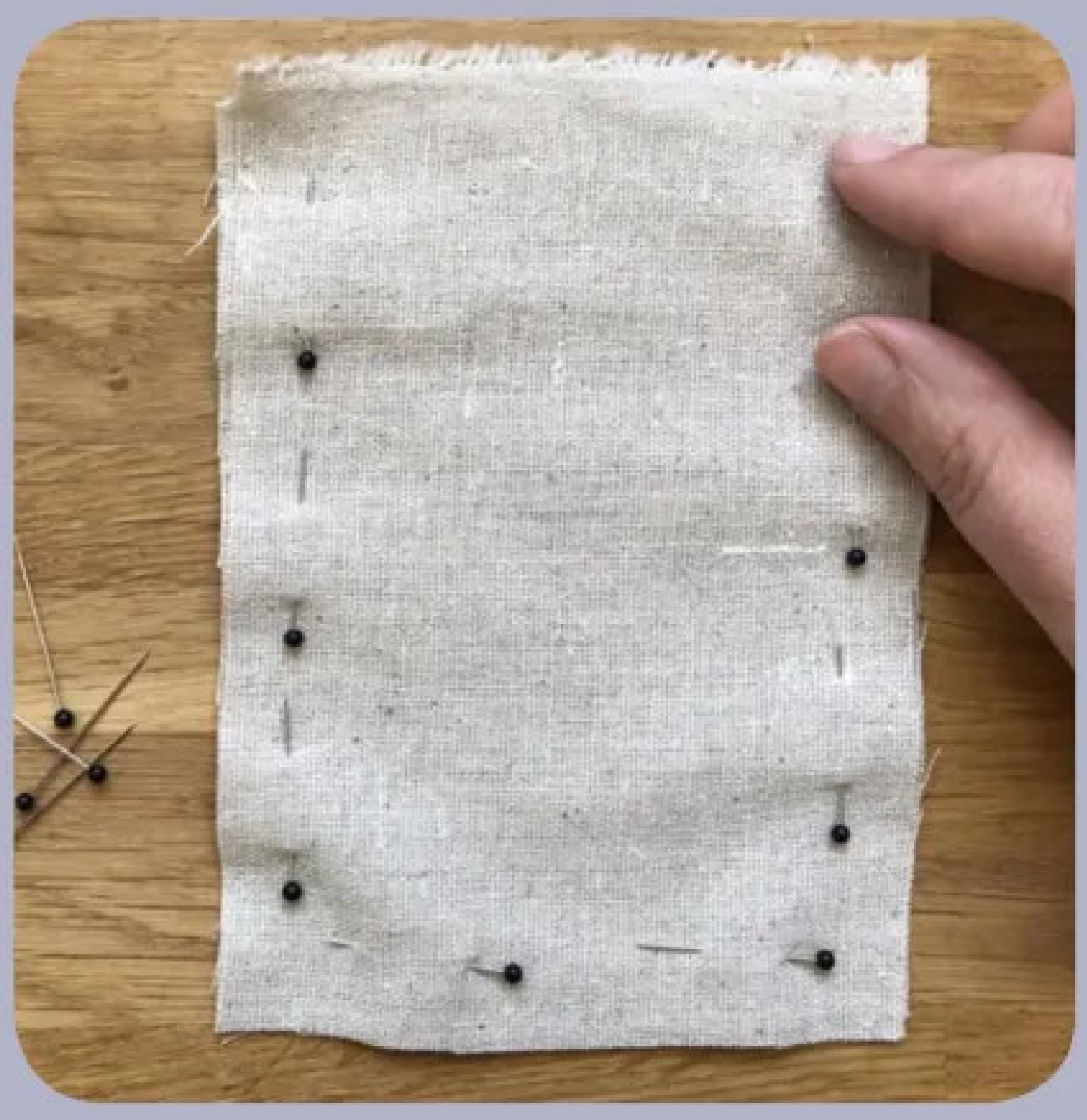
Select your fabric and cut out matching pieces. You need two pieces per lavender bag, preferably cut from natural, breathable fabric like linen or cotton. Pick whatever size you like, but try not to go smaller than 10cm x 6cm, otherwise it will be too fiddly at the turning-out stage. Pin two pieces together, right sides of the fabric facing inwards.

2. SEW IT TOGETHER

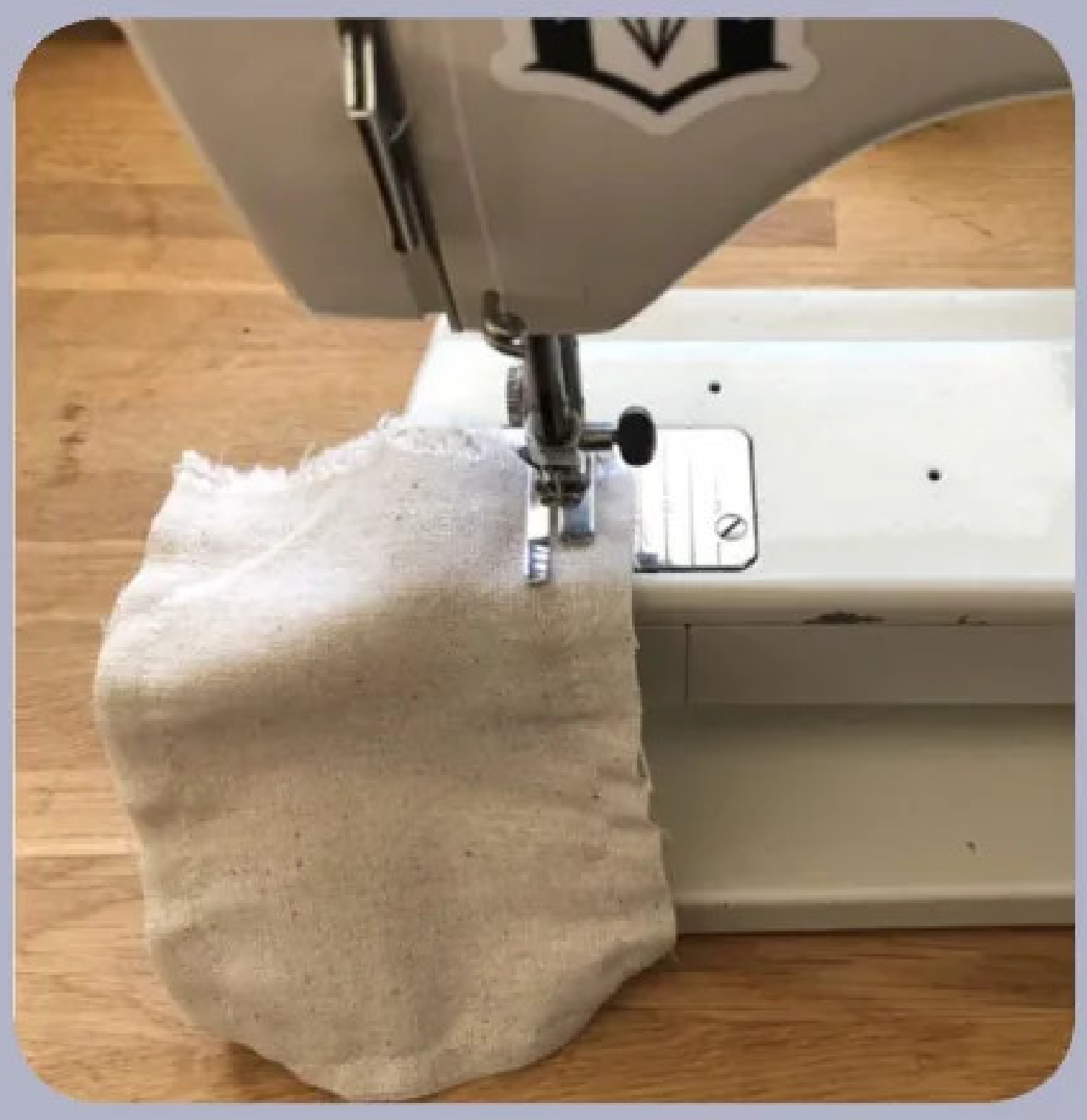
Now it's time to sew it together. If you're hand stitching, knot the thread and do a simple chain stitch, approximately 1cm in from the edge of your fabric. Stop around 4cm before you meet your starting point to leave a gap – this will be your filling/turning point. Using a sewing machine? Follow the same instructions but just backstitch at the start and end in order to secure your stitches.

3. APPLY FINISHING TOUCHES

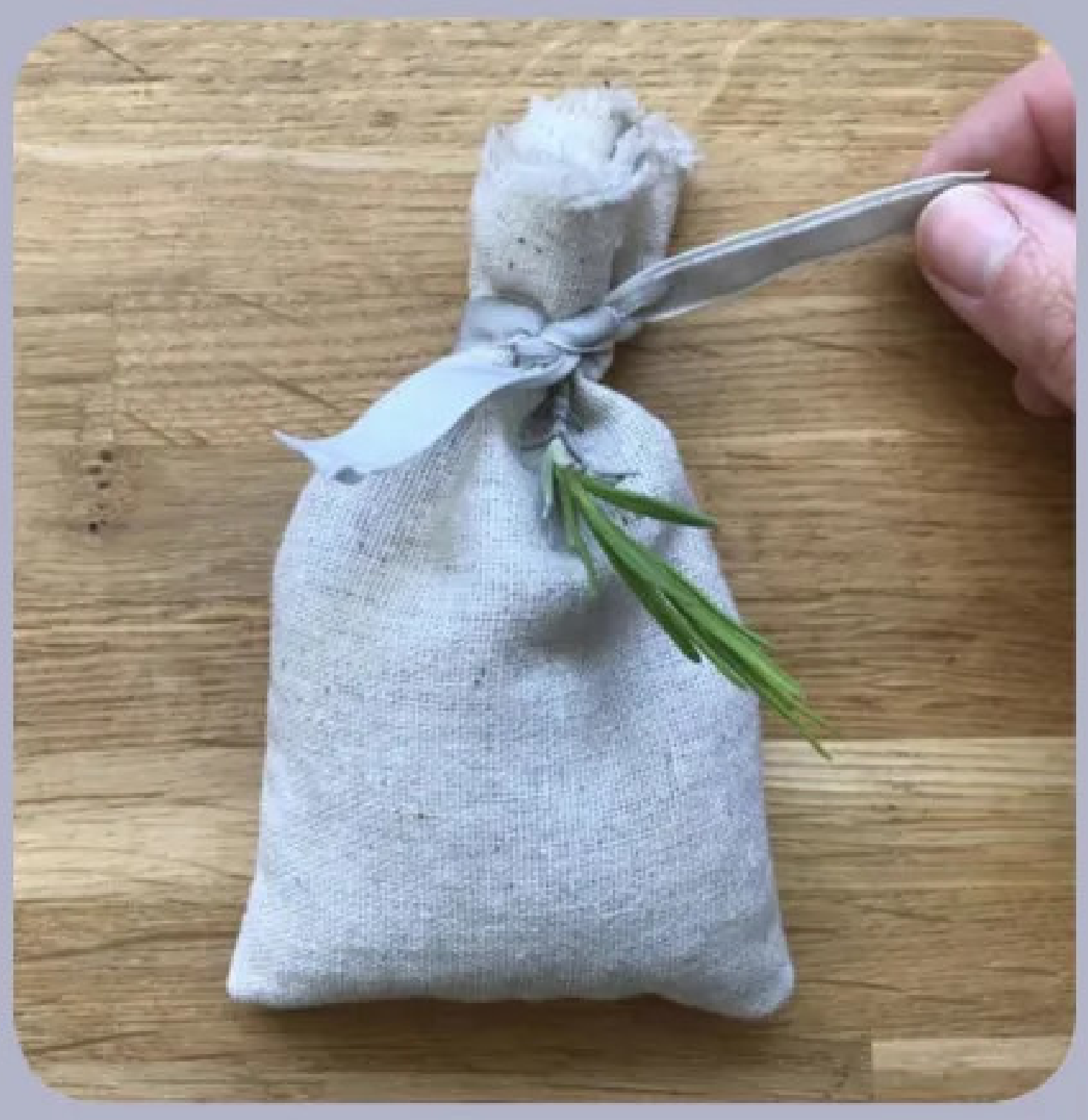
Unpin your fabric and turn your little bag right side out. Use something blunt and pointy, like a knitting needle or crochet hook, to push into the corners. Fill up with dried lavender. If you're also adding dry rice or toy stuffing, mix it evenly with the lavender beforehand. Hand stitch the gap up to close, and tie a ribbon around the top.



Cut and pin your fabric, ready for sewing



Stitch the fabric together – remember to leave a gap!



Tie a ribbon around the top as a finishing touch

You will need

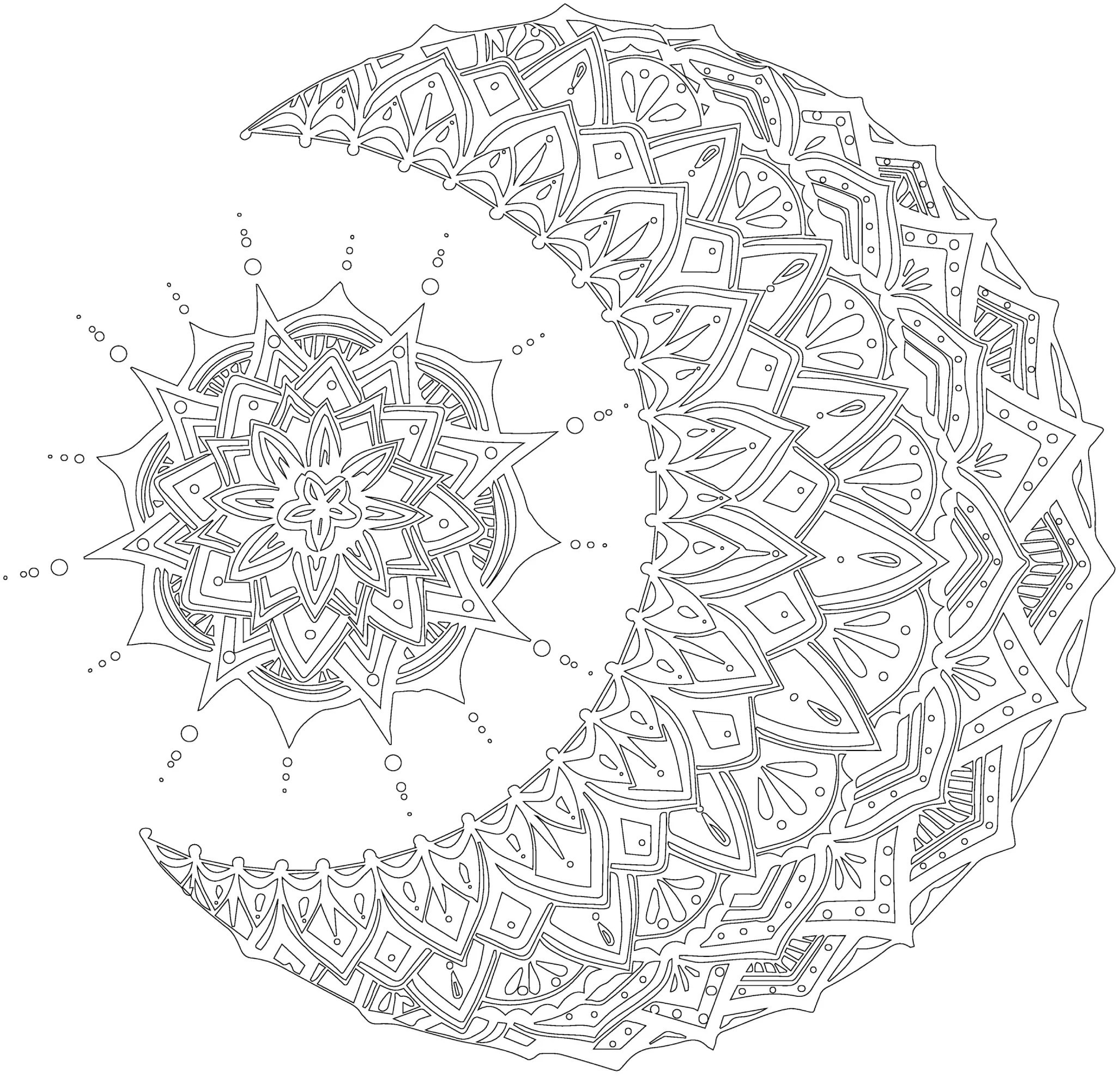
- * Fabric scraps
- * Dried lavender (you can buy this online if you prefer)
- * Pins
- * Scissors
- * Pinking shears (optional)
- * Sewing needle and matching thread (or sewing machine, if you have one)
- * Ribbon to decorate (optional)
- * Toy stuffing or rice

© Alamy

Midnight colour

Calm your mind and wind down for the night by adding colour to these night-time illustrations

© Getty Images



© Getty Images

Lifestyle

"The most important thing is to enjoy your life – to be happy – it's all that matters"

– AUDREY HEPBURN –

Scandi style
(and why we love it)

From hygge to lagom, it seems we're still swooning after all things Nordic when it comes to decorating schemes, as Jennifer Morgan explores

There's been a Scandi style revolution in recent years – and with it has come new vocabulary that we've absorbed very quickly into everyday usage. How many of us have said (or heard friends say): "Oooh, I'm going to add a touch of 'hygge'," (loosely translated as adding more texture), or "I'm going for a Scandi look in my bedroom," (more of a simple style, less clutter)? How many books and articles have advised us to embrace the concept of 'lagom' (something that's all about balance – not too little or too much)? But what effect has this had on our decorating and style choices – and is our cultural love affair with all things Scandi still rosy?

"Scandinavian style is pared-back and fuss free," says Niki Brantmark, originally from London, now living in Sweden. Niki is author of *Lagom: The Swedish Art of Living a Balanced, Happy Life* (Harper Thorsons, £9.99/$19.99), and blogs at **myscandinavianhome.com**. "There's nothing bold or over-the-top about it, which means it's appealing to a wide audience. At a time where we feel we are connected 24/7 and constantly stressed out, the simplicity of the muted, earthy Scandi look brings an element of calm to the home, turning it into an oasis."

© Ikea

"Scandi interiors are simple, pared-back, elegant and timeless, enduring beyond trends and changing fashion," agrees writer and stylist Cate St Hill (**catesthill.com**). "It's all about living with less but living with better. It's about being mindful of how furniture is placed in a room, of how designs relate to each other, where things come from and how they are made. But Scandi is also more than this. It's about a feeling of homeliness and familiarity; creating a space that's warm, cosy and inviting."

Someone who knows just how appealing creating a Scandi-style space can be is blogger and influencer Reena Simon, whose Instagram account, dedicated to all things 'hygge', has more than 158,000 followers (**@hygge_for_home**). "I think we are drawn to light and space, yearning for a connection to the outdoors, and Scandi style gives us this in an affordable and accessible way. It's open for everyone to achieve," Reena explains. "There are also many different ways of achieving a Scandi décor; if you are more drawn towards vintage or like a modern twist, then it still works. I like a rustic, industrial take on it – and it's this flexibility that makes it appealing."

THE BUZZWORDS

Back to the Scandi buzzwords. "'Hygge', to me, means taking time to enjoy the little things, such as moments with the family," says Reena, who's mum to three girls under six. "This translates to a home in making it a warm and inviting place."

"It's a cosy, familiar setting that gives you a warm, fuzzy feeling," adds Niki, "whereas 'lagom' is the Swedish philosophy for enjoying balance in every aspect of life, from work and leisure to family and food, and everything in between. By seeking equilibrium, you can relieve stress and make more time for the things that matter most in life." Since moving to Sweden more than 15 years ago, Niki's slowly whittled down the items in her home. "I'm now at a happy medium," she explains, "where everything is either used or loved (or, in an ideal world, both). I've experienced the benefits of a decluttered home first-hand, and I feel organised and calm as a result. I might add more colour and pattern… but Scandinavian style will always be at the heart of my interior design."

UNIQUE & ADAPTABLE

Niki says that Scandi style enables us to be individual – another of the reasons we're so obsessed. "Five years ago, everything was black and white and graphical; today it has a much softer, warmer edge. We're seeing white walls being replaced with warm neutrals, muted pastels and bolder, earthy colours. Patterned wallpaper is also making a big comeback. The beauty of Scandi style

is that you can keep your home simple and pared back, and yet still adapt it to incorporate the latest influences as they come and go."

"I don't necessarily see Scandi as a trend," explains Cate. "It's more a way of life. It's not just about how a space looks, but how it feels. And I think that's something that will endure. There's a move towards warm minimalism, with deeper hues and rich, neutral tones – I'm seeing lots of beige, honey, ochre, burgundy, navy and forest green used to create cosy, inviting spaces that are still elegant and serene in their simplicity. It's about building a sense of cohesion, so no piece of furniture or colour is over-dominating the space."

FINDING A STYLE THAT SUITS YOU

So what about the craze for maximalism, where more is more? Should Scandi lovers be worried? "It's not a style that suits everyone," says Cate. "I don't like too much clutter, and bold, clashing colours tend to give me a headache. Brights like red, orange and purple would keep me awake and alert. I'm quite a shy, quiet person, so I want my interior to reflect my personality. Scandi allows the home to become a neutral background for everyday life; a space that can evolve with you as you gather the things that make a home."

"I do like having things on show," says Reena, "whether that's lots of books or open shelving in my kitchen, but I'm not a maximalist or a minimalist – rather somewhere in between. I don't think I've nailed 'lagom' quite yet when it comes to work and family life, though," she laughs.

Of course, there are certain brands that we Scandi-style seekers aspire to. "Muuto, Hay, &tradition and Menu – you could call them the 'New Nordics'," Cate enthuses. "They create minimal furniture and accessories with roots in Scandinavian design tradition, but with an eye to the future – whether that's working with up-and-coming designers or using new materials and techniques."

"I love House Doctor and Broste Copenhagen," says Reena. "I love the earthy tones and the textures of their home accessories. My wishlist for both of them is endless!"

"I'm a big fan of mid-century classics and admire Hans J Wegner, but Scandinavians are known for producing beautiful hand-crafted items too," Niki says. "I try to support local ateliers in my hometown of Malmö, such as ceramicist Siv Andreasson (**andreasondesign.se**). When we talk about Scandinavian design, Finland is thrown into the mix with Sweden, Denmark and Norway. These four countries share a common design language that's characterised by simplicity, minimalism and functionality. Pieces are designed for the many and built to stand the test of time."

SCANDI AND THE SEASONS

"One of the things I admire most about Scandinavian homes is the way they adapt to the season," says Niki. "Simple changes can make the world of difference. In the summer, light linen cushions and arrangements of hand-picked flowers bring in a light, whimsical touch. Outside, you'll find rattan and wooden furniture dressed with cushions and blankets, a string of lights and candles. In the autumn, sheepskins, woollen blankets and in-season vignettes like acorns and pine cones appear – with yet more candles."

"You can easily season-proof Scandi as it's all about texture," Reena says. "It lends itself well to summer evenings outdoors – think log stacks, an outdoor fire pit, a seating area with lots of cushions, throws and greenery, and you've got it just right."

© Furniture Village; Ikea

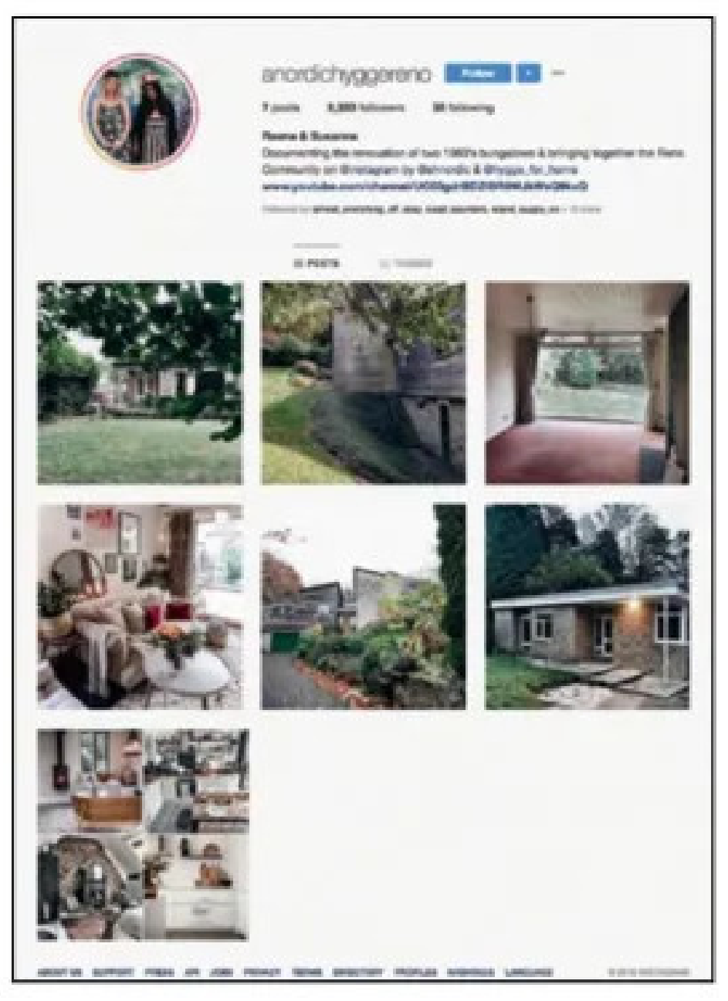
Picks to inspire your home

LAGOM
The Swedish Art of Living a Balanced, Happy Life
NIKI BRANTMARK
creator of My Scandinavian Home

THE BOOK
Lagom: The Swedish Art of Living a Balanced, Happy Life by Niki Brantmark (Harper Thorsons, £9.99/$19.99).

inside my home

THE BLOG
Follow Cate St Hill's fantastic blog for simple, stylish Scandi-style living inspiration at **catesthill.com**.



anordichyggereno

THE INFLUENCER
Reena Simon is about to embark on a stylish new 'hygge' project. You can find out more at: **@anordichyggereno**.

Scandi shops

Part of the H&M group, ARKET is a modern-day market offering essentials for men, women, children and the home. There are six stores in the UK, or you can shop online at **arket.com**.

Hus & Hem calls itself a 'Smörgåsbord of Scandinavia design', and it certainly doesn't disappoint. Visit its store in Ledbury, Herefordshire (UK), or shop online at **husandhem.co.uk**.

Beaumonde stocks one of our favourite Scandi homeware brands, Bloomingville. Products from this Danish brand arrive weekly and special orders on request (**beaumonde.co.uk**).

Something old, something new

Sarah Gane goes beyond 'shabby chic' to look at why there has never been a better time to start upcycling

It's no secret we're in a climate emergency. The way we consume things like fashion, food and homewares is unsustainable. According to research by the Reuse Network (**reuse-network.org.uk**), ten million household items are sent to landfill every single year. But what if we were to do things a little differently and learn to love our things for longer?

Upcycling is not a new concept in itself. Taking something that has seen better days and giving it a new lease of life has long been used by people as a creative way of making do or making something completely unique. For Elizabeth Morris (**@ElizabethDotDesign** on Instagram), it was something she was aware of from a young age: "Throughout my childhood, my mum was often updating items around the house, repurposing furniture we already owned. I loved getting involved, choosing items from auctions to paint for my bedroom. It's something I've always enjoyed, so when it came to furnishing my own home, I naturally went looking for items to upcycle."

This approach went on to have unexpected benefits, as she explains: "I realised that so many people want to fill their homes with unique furniture, but don't have the time or tools to do so – that's where my business began." She launched Elizabeth Dot Design and sells beautiful upcycled furniture through her Etsy store (**etsy.com/shop/elizabethdotdesign**).

FIX UP, LOOK SHARP

"What I love most about upcycling is seeing a tired piece of furniture transformed to fit within a modern home," says Elizabeth. "I specialise in mid-century pieces, which often look amazing without any paintwork, so I prefer to seek out the pieces that are damaged, stained or broken. I really enjoy the process of fixing these well-built, solid items that have years of use left in them. The paint finish is the final step – I often use bold, graphic designs to hide any imperfections I've fixed, and ensure any salvageable wood grain is highlighted."

Former PR manager Stacy, aka **@TillyAndSage** on Instagram (**tillyandsage.co.uk**), also started out upcycling as a hobby, making presents for people, before it evolved into a full-time business. "I've always had a creative streak and enjoyed making things… I'd been painting wooden gifts for friends and family when I saw an empty milk bottle in the kitchen at work and I thought I'd try painting that."

The results were really positive, as she explains: "When I posted a picture of it on Facebook I was inundated with requests to make more. That was just over four years ago, and I've run Tilly and Sage full time ever since." For Stacy, it's the creative challenge and satisfaction of the end result that is so appealing: "I just love turning someone's 'rubbish' into quirky items for the home and saving another item from getting sent to landfill."

So far she's rescued everything from jars to old gin bottles: "I've recently started making soap dispensers out of [them]. All my friends and family save them for me… some of the bottles are gorgeous, far too nice to throw away. Instead I upcycle them so that people can get enjoyment for years to come."

But her most popular item so far is the festive 'cars in jars'. "These came about because I had some old Matchbox cars that I didn't want to part with. I transformed them into Christmas ornaments and they're a big hit every year. I love scouring vintage fairs and car boot sales looking for the cars!"

LOOK TO THE PAST

Vintage items are also used as a starting point for Suzanne Whitelock's stationery projects. Her business, Pulp Paper Heaven (**@pulp_paper_heaven on Instagram / etsy.com/uk/shop/PulpPaperHeaven**), specialises in beautiful handmade notebooks, each one made by reusing original prints saved from the pulping machine.

© Getty Images; Elizabeth Morris

HEIDI
JOHANNA SPYRI
COLLINS

KILNER
EST 1842
Teddy

> Happy accidents can produce the most fun projects

"I've [always been] drawn to past times," she tells us. "Glamorous movie stars from the '30s, the shapes of fashions from the '20s to the '50s, furniture, household items, sewing patterns, and books and magazines."

As a child, Suzanne used her pocket money to buy treasures from markets, jumble sales and charity shops: "I love the colour and illustration quality of a lot of vintage print. An old book can have a magical air when you think of the many hands that made it and have read it! They inspire me beyond what is written."

Much like Elizabeth, Suzanne also prefers working with damaged items. "The books and prints I use for binding are worn, torn and crumbly – or, as I like to think, 'overloved'. I can't help imagining all the previous owners, especially when I find interesting inscriptions, recipes, photos or postcards tucked inside." Treasures like this also make their way into her designs: "These get bound back in as part of the new notebook. It's important to keep these snippets of time and people's lives as integral to the book. We all follow our own path, but we criss-cross each other as we go."

HOW TO GET STARTED

Feeling inspired and thinking of tackling a new upcycling project, but not sure where to start? "My main tip would be to be brave and give it a go," says Stacy. "The best thing about upcycling is that your initial costs are very low, so you can experiment with different ideas without worrying about things going wrong and losing too much money."

Whether it's reimagining a new use for an existing item – refashioning old fabric into cushions or clothes for example – anything is possible. Having the freedom to experiment is key. If you're keen on sewing, curtains or bedsheets could become pyjama bottoms, dresses or even a den for little ones.

Happy accidents can produce the most fun projects too. That wool scarf or jumper you shrunk in the wash by mistake? Turn it into a cushion cover! Simply sew the front and back together with a corresponding yarn colour and fill it with a cushion inner. With straightforward projects like these, you'll slowly but surely gather enough unique creations to make your home your own and learn as you go.

What's more, by upcycling furniture, you essentially give a whole room a completely new look for the price of some basic supplies, tools, paint and a bit of spare time. Spending a good chunk of that on prep work will give you a lasting finish, as Elizabeth tells us: "I'm guilty of wanting to see instant results, but I've learnt that preparation is vital if you want the paintwork to last. Give yourself enough time to thoroughly sand, clean and prime before painting. It might be tempting to go straight for the paint tin, but if you don't prep then the paintwork will quickly get chipped and damaged."

If you have no room for more furniture, "work with items you love or have some meaning for you," says Suzanne. "It will show in the end result. Practise technique and keep developing new ideas, and you will come up with your personal way of creating that is unique to you."

Outside of this, there are plenty of blogs, Pinterest boards, and relevant hashtags and challenges on Instagram to give you some ideas and motivation to get started. You could even use social media as a way of documenting the process to inspire someone else!

© Suzanne Whitelock; Stacy O'Brien; Elizabeth Morris

Beyond upcycling: ways you can make a difference

Reuse

Donating unwanted furniture and electronics to worthy causes such as Reuse Network helps to reduce poverty, cut waste and tackle social exclusion. This organisation alone has helped more than 1.55 million families, saving a whopping 129,250 tonnes of CO_2. Use its fun online calculator to work out how much your unwanted items could help people and the environment.

reuse-network.org.uk

Repair

'Move slow and fix things' says The Restart Project. This organisation helps people learn how to repair broken electronics, as well as rethink how they consume them in the first place.

therestartproject.org

Recycle

Is your item beyond repair? Sites such as RecycleNow or, for those in the US, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), provide some great tips and advice on how to recycle items safely, helping the environment.

recyclenow.com / epa.gov/recycle

Plastic (not) fantastic

Laurie Newman looks at some of the best ways to reduce plastic in your home, from the bathroom to the kitchen

Croll & Denecke
THE BEESWAX WRAP CO.
Handmade in The Cotswolds
THE BEESWAX WRAP CO.
Carly and Fran
TABITHA EVE
MAKE UP PADS
ORGANIC BAMBOO & COTTON
KARMA

Brush with bamboo

Croll & Denecke

If someone uses a toothbrush, chances are it's a plastic one, which is a very worrying statistic given they are usually replaced every three months. Switch to a more sustainable and eco-friendly toothbrush like bamboo.

Switch up the shower gel

Lush

Shower gel may make you smell great but it's not doing anything for the environment. Swap shower gels and their unwanted packaging for solid bars of soap. Lush has an innovative selection of 'naked' shower gels and washcards that are free from packaging and fab in the shower.

Reuse cleansing pads

The Plastic Free Shop

Cotton wool is incredibly versatile, making it one of the most common products found in beauty regimes. However, it is very wasteful and taxing on the environment. People also flush them down the toilet meaning they pass into our oceans. Switch to reusable, organic cotton pads like these ones.

TISSERAND
Rosemary
ESSENTIAL OIL
9ml e 0.3 fl.oz
TISSERAND
Lemon
ESSENTIAL OIL
9ml e 0.3 fl.oz
TISSERAND
Peppermint
ESSENTIAL OIL
9ml e 0.3 fl.oz
eco

Wrap the eco way

The Beeswax Wrap Co

Plastic film is not the answer to keeping your sandwiches fresh! Plastic-free food wrapping is a great way to preserve your lunch and minimise your plastic footprint. Most can also be wiped down, meaning it can be used time and time again. These beeswax wraps are handmade in Nailsworth in the UK by owners Fran and Carly using organic GOTS certified cotton (in super-funky patterns), pine resin, organic jojoba oil and locally sourced UK beeswax.

Spring clean without guilt!

Tisserand

Cleaning products can quickly rack up plastic waste so try making them yourself. One great natural cleaner is white wine vinegar, which often comes in glass bottles making it a great switch from the usual plastic spray cleaners. Alternatively, make your own household cleaner in a reusable bottle by adding your favourite essential oils to water. Lemon and tea tree both work wonders when cleaning surfaces. Purchase your favourites from Tisserand now and get cleaning!

Ditch the shampoo

Lush

If you wash your hair more than three times a week it's safe to say you will quickly accumulate a fair few bottles in your bin. Why not consider switching to shampoo bars? They are free from plastic and completely dissolve, making them free from waste . Lush has a great selection of shampoo bars that smell divine, too!

Make your lunches more eco-friendly

Sourced from TKMaxx

One of the quickest ways to reduce plastic waste is by making your meals in advance to avoid the emergency lunchtime supermarket dash. The popular 'meal deal' often features one-time use plastic – whether it be from your chosen bottled drink or your salad. Instead, invest in some jazzy containers made from bamboo fibre. Nice on the environment and on your wallet!

Use refill stations

Thankfully lots of shops are now getting onboard with the need to reduce plastic and are providing customers with refilling stations. Look out for your local zero waste store to restock on liquid washing detergent, pulses and grains and avoid unwanted packaging.

DIY beauty

Beauty products have one thing in common: plastic packaging. From bottles of moisturiser to mascara tubes, we all have them in our beauty cabinets. Try making your own products at home and store them in airtight containers to avoid purchasing unwanted plastic packaging. A good one to try at home is coffee scrub – mix coffee, coconut oil and brown sugar together for a great DIY exfoliator.

© Photographer Rebecca Greig

A day without laughter is a day wasted
GIRL
WER

Working from home

Improve your health, increase productivity and have a better work-life balance – Julie Bassett shows us how shunning the traditional 9-5 office environment can have a big impact on your wellbeing

More of us than ever are turning away from office life in favour of working from the comfort of our own homes. Those working from home are either self-employed, starting their own small businesses or using their skills as a sole trader; or they're making the most of flexible working through their employer.

The traditional '9-5' is becoming less common. Many employers now offer remote working, the ability to condense hours or work 'flexi-time', which all contribute to a better work-life balance.

A recent study (source: Virgin Media) reveals that 31 per cent of employees work from home at least one day per week, and it predicts that by 2022 there could be as many as 15.6 million homeworkers in the UK alone. Self-employment is on the rise too, with more than 15 per cent of the workforce now self-employed (source: ONS).

This all adds up to a lot of people making their home their new workspace. And there are plenty of benefits to working from home, not least for our own health and wellbeing.

This flexibility means you can retain your career and build on your skills

PICK YOUR WORKING HOURS

For most people, the ability to have more control over their own working hours is the biggest reason for the change to homeworking. This can have a huge impact on our wellbeing, as we can work at a time that suits us best.

Some of us are naturally early birds, while others are night owls. In a 'normal' working environment, we're sat at our desks from 9am to 5pm, ploughing through our workload. But what if you could increase your productivity by timing work in sync with your own natural rhythm?

Say you wake up early every day feeling energised, but struggle with lethargy in the afternoons. Chances are you find these hours the toughest at work with a lack of motivation and focus. You might turn to copious amounts of coffee or reach for the biscuit tin at these times as a way of coping.

Imagine, instead, that you could get up and start work in the morning as soon as your synapses are firing. You could get a full day's work done and dusted by mid-afternoon. When that slump hits, rather than push through, you can settle down with a refreshing cup of tea and a good book. Listening to your body in this way can make you more productive – by working when you feel the most focused, you are likely to get more done in the same amount of time.

It works the other way around, too. If you find mornings tough, you can opt to start work later, having a leisurely morning preparing yourself for the task ahead. By the time you start work, you'll be properly focused and ready to meet challenges head on.

If you're working for an employer, chances are you're required to complete a certain number of hours per day or per week, and there might be set hours you have to be online. This may still come with certain limitations, but enough freedom to tailor your working day to suit the times you're most productive. This in turn benefits your employer as they're getting the best out of you each and every day.

You can also take breaks whenever you need one. If you're starting to feel tired, a screen break can do wonders for getting you going again. If you have a problem you can't solve, why not head out for a walk to mull it over rather than sitting at your desk with no resolution?

BALANCE YOUR LIFE

For most people, the biggest advantage of picking their own working hours is that it enables them to tailor their work-life-home balance to suit their personal needs. For those with families, this means you can choose to work around school hours, for example, or spend time with older relatives during the day when they need company.

This flexibility means you can retain your career and build on your skills, but you are also able to meet your home responsibilities, without the pressure of having to commute daily and stick to rigid working hours.

The trend of homeworking means more people are able to stay engaged in work during life's big changes. Having children, for example, often leaves new parents overwhelmed with trying to balance childcare, work, finances, quality family time and so on. Being able to work in a way that allows for such flexibility encourages more people to continue to work without feeling they're sacrificing other areas of their life.

A healthy work-life balance is so important for our overall health and wellbeing. It also helps us with our personal relationships, friendships and self-care. It makes us more productive when we're at work, as well as more relaxed when we're not. Finding that ultimate balance certainly isn't easy, but opting to work from home either all the time or part-time can help to tip the scales in the right direction.

Work can be a big cause of stress in our lives, with pressure to perform and long hours often par for the course. Choosing to work from home might not reduce your overall workload, but it can start to bring that stress into line. Commuting, for example, is one reason for workers getting stressed – trains running late, breakdowns, time wasted getting from one place to another. If nothing else, working from home removes this daily hassle, freeing up time to get more done.

Working from home helps us to get a better work-life balance in other ways, too. You can break up your working day by doing things that you enjoy between tasks. For example, take a proper lunch break and have a walk in the sunshine – you will return to work feeling far more energised. You can also schedule your working hours around hobbies or activities you enjoy. Why not book a morning yoga class to start your day calmly, or go for an afternoon run to renew your energy?

Having a good work-life balance helps you to improve your physical health. If you're feeling under the weather, you can rest and relax more at home than you could in an office, meaning you can recover much faster.

CHOOSE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

When you work from home, you have the opportunity to set up a workspace that motivates and energises you. If you have the space for an office, that's great, but even a corner of a room that's dedicated to work gives you somewhere to focus.

'Working from home' doesn't have to strictly mean 'from home' either. Many homeworkers will opt to get out of the house and take their laptop to a nearby café. Anywhere with good coffee and strong wi-fi can be your new mobile office. This prevents the boredom of looking at the same four walls from kicking in, as well as gives you the buzz of company if you prefer. It also means you can plan meetings in cafés and coffee shops, and work around appointments – no time is wasted.

In the summer months, there is no better way to work than in the garden with a cold drink and a cool breeze. There are no limitations – as long as you complete what you need to get done, you can do it wherever you like. We've even heard of people travelling the world while also working from roadside cafés throughout their journeys!

By getting out of a corporate and faceless office environment, you're likely to feel more inspired and creative, which you can filter into your work. This benefits both you personally and gives you great job satisfaction, but it benefits your employer or clients too.

WORK BETTER

Another benefit is that you will probably be more motivated in your working life. When you're working from home, the incentive to make every working hour count is higher. The sooner you finish your workload, the sooner you can switch off and do something you love instead.

You can create an environment with fewer distractions. An office with many employees can be noisy, with constant interruptions by email or phone, not to mention coffee breaks and meetings. At home, you control your time. Block out space in your diary when you can't be disturbed – turn off your emails and phone for an hour, and you'll be surprised how much you get done. This increase in productivity is great for your employer or your clients. Doing well in your job can in turn improve your prospects.

There are numerous benefits to be gained by making the switch to working from home. Even if you can just get one day a week out of the office, you can start to reap the rewards in both your professional and personal life.

© Getty Images

Create an eco-friendly wardrobe

Sarah Gane looks at how changing our approach to clothing and shopping can help people and the planet

Clothing is the ultimate tool for creative expression. What we wear says a lot about us. But, over recent years, the way we shop for clothes has changed. Gone are the days of having two seasons a year: spring/summer and autumn/winter. If we were to head into our favourite high-street store, we're likely to see new garments and collections every week. To make matters worse, research from Greenpeace shows that around 40 per cent of clothes we own are rarely or never worn.

As most of us already know, this unsustainable quench for something new is affecting our planet. According to Fashion Revolution (**fashionrevolution.org**), global textile production emits 1.2 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases annually. That's more than that of international flights and maritime shipping combined. Something has to be done. And the best thing? Change really can start in our own homes.

"Every time we buy, wear and dispose of clothes, we create an environmental footprint and an impact on the people who make them, most of whom are women. That's why positive change is more urgent than ever if we are to tackle change and create a more equitable future for all," says Carry Somers, Fashion Revolution co-founder and global operations director.

WHERE TO START

First up, let's look in our own wardrobes. Doing an audit of existing clothing – literally laying it all out there – enables us to see what we are really dealing with. Separate the items into piles: to keep, to mend, to donate and to recycle. Be honest with yourself about things that don't suit you, or make you feel less than gorgeous while wearing them. Clothes should be comfortable and enjoyable to wear. This isn't about shaming or punishing yourself either. Make it fun: put some tunes on, get a nice cuppa and have some snacks to give you the fuel to keep you motivated.

Now you know what you've got to work with, you can move forward. What gaps have you noticed? Perhaps your most worn items are a little 'overloved'. Jot down a list of essentials you need for future reference and put it to one side.

FIXIN' TIME

When it comes to clothing, wear and tear is inevitable. Bobbles, missing buttons, teeny tiny holes... these are all the signs of a well-loved garment. They're relatively easy fixes too. Try running a pilling comb over your favourite jumper to remove the bobbles. Meanwhile, missing buttons and tiny holes can be sorted in a flash with just a needle and thread required.

Another great approach for bigger holes or stains could be to try a little 'visible mending' – make a feature of its imperfections and let your fixing be on display. Check out **@TomOfHolland**, **@KatrinaRodabaugh** or the many other beautiful examples on Instagram, using #visiblemending for inspiration.

Perhaps a pair of trousers or jeans are a little too long, or you'd prefer a different style of cut – from wide leg to regular for example – or maybe a zip is broken. If

© Getty Images; Thought

Thought Clothing champions innovative sustainable fabrics, such as bamboo, cotton, wool and hemp in its products
wearethought.com

Refashioning is a great way of using up existing resources

you're crafty, you might be able to tackle this in your spare time; if you're not, consider attending a local sewing class to learn some new skills. It can be a great way of relaxing after a busy day at work, as well as the added bonus of meeting new, like-minded people. Alternatively, take them along to a local seamstress to fix. You're supporting the local economy, as well as keeping clothes out of the bin.

RECYCLING AND REFASHIONING

When it comes to your 'recycling' pile, you have a few options. Perhaps you could organise a clothes swap with friends and family. It's a brilliant opportunity to meet up, relax, share a drink and nibbles, and gain some lovely new clothes for your wardrobe.

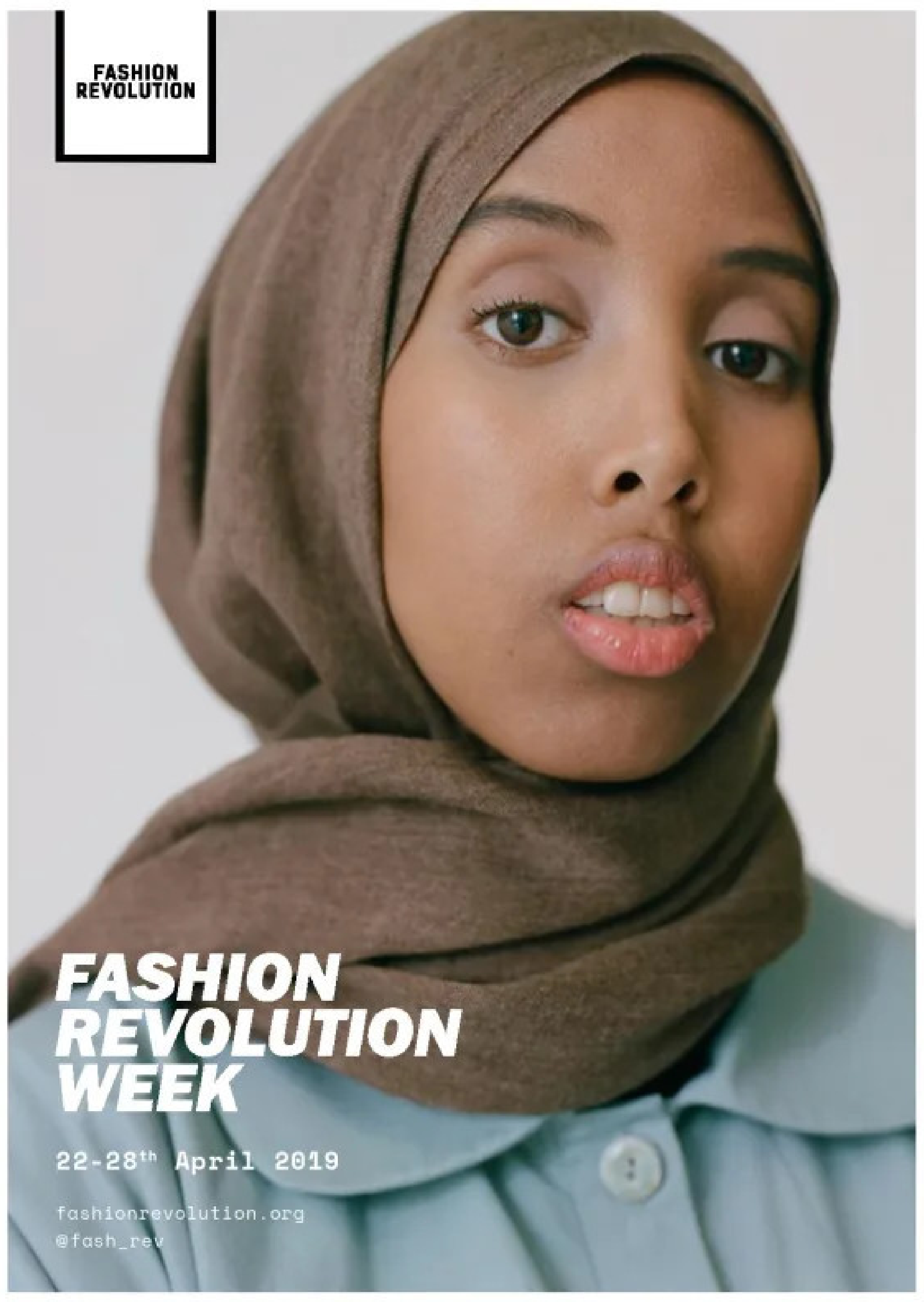
You could, of course, donate the items to a charity shop; well-worn and damaged clothes could be dropped off at your local textile recycling centre for them to be given a new lease of life. **Loveyourclothes.org.uk** has a list of recycling information on its website.

For those handy with a sewing machine, refashioning is a great way of using up existing resources and transforming them into something you'll actually wear. Great things can be made from the most unlikely of garments. Tents can become dog coats; shrunken jumpers could become cushion covers; curtains or bedsheets could be made into pyjamas, easy-peasy shopping tote bags, play tents or kids' summer dresses. Don't discount fabric scraps either – save them for pincushions, quilts or beeswax wraps.

Better yet, there's a whole community already tackling these sorts of projects, so you'll have plenty of support and help with any questions. A great starting point would be to get involved in the annual Refashioners challenge – head over to Portia Lawrie's blog (**https://makery.co.uk/**) to see what can be done with limited resources and limitless imagination. Pinterest and Instagram also have some great tutorials. When you've finished, don't forget to document and share what you've made on social media or your blog if you have one – it'll help inspire others.

BUYING SOMETHING NEW

Switching to more eco-friendly fashion isn't about stopping shopping completely; it's about slowing the process down, doing some research and really considering what we purchase – buying less, but better quality. We care about what we eat, and wouldn't dream of buying cosmetics or beauty products that were tested on animals, so it makes sense to take the same approach to clothes. As journalist Lucy Siegle once said: "Fast fashion isn't free. Someone, somewhere is paying."



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DOING RESEARCH

First of all think about all of your favourite shops and high-street brands – what do you really know about their ethics and working practices? Luckily for us, Fashion Revolution has done some amazing work in this respect. Simply head over to **fashionrevolution.org** to read this year's report on how each fashion brand fared. The results may surprise you.

Next, it's time to think about fabrics. Opting for an organic fibre is most definitely a good start. "Organic textiles, especially organic cotton, provide solutions to many of the challenges that are related to the increasing consumption of fashion and fabrics," confirms the Soil Association on its website. "Organic cotton helps to combat climate change, use less water, no hazardous synthetic pesticides are used and only low-impact dyes are allowed. It is also better for farmers and factory workers, and GM is banned."

Thankfully, other alternative fabric choices are becoming more mainstream too: bamboo; Lyocell and Modal fabrics (made from wood pulp and beechwood fibres respectively); hemp; and even fruit fibres such as Abaca cotton, made from banana stalks blended with cotton, or Piña silk from the leaves of pineapples.

SLOWER SHOPPING

Whatever you're in the market for though, the important thing is to slow down your shopping to really consider what's in your basket. Consider the shapes and styles you feel most comfortable in. So, for example, the list of your 'essentials' that you jotted down can be your starting point, or simply have a look in your laundry bin – what we think is our style and what we actually wear can actually be very different sometimes. According to BBC Earth (**bbcearth.com**), three out of every five t-shirts bought today will end up in the bin within the year – but when we're investing in something we love and brands we support, we're more inclined to wear and repair them.

And, as consumers, the great news is we've never had so much choice. Brands such as People Tree (**peopletree.co.uk**), Thought Clothing (**wearethought.com**), Komodo (**komodo.co.uk**), BAM (**bambooclothing.co.uk**), Veja (**veja-store.com**), Patagonia (**patagonia.com**) and Rapanui (**rapanuiclothing.com**) sell some beautiful, ethically made clothes and accessories to suit a range of budgets. More and more regular high-street stores are offering organic ranges too, but refer to the Fashion Transparency Index (via Fashion Revolution) for a clearer picture on their working practices. WRAP's (Waste and Resources Action Programme) Love Your Clothes campaign website also has some brilliant information on buying and caring for your clothes: **loveyourclothes.org.uk**.

INDEPENDENT DESIGNER MAKERS

For those who would like to support smaller brands and businesses, Instagram is a great starting point to seek out like-minded, ethical makers. Check out Nido (**nido-web.com.ar**) who

Follow

#WhoMadeMyClothes on social media, as part of Fashion Revolution's ongoing campaign.

Fashion Revolution aims to shine a light on unethical working practices and environmental issues caused by the fashion industry.

Did you know?

Less than 1% of material used to produce clothing is recycled into new clothing.

Ellen Macarthur Foundation

It takes 2,720 litres of water to make a t-shirt. That's how much we normally drink over a three-year period.

Fashion Revolution

A third of the carbon footprint of clothes comes from the way we care for them.

Fashion Revolution

By doubling the useful life of clothing from one year to two years reduces emissions over the year by 24%.

Fashion Revolution and Greenpeace

© Getty Images; Fashion Revolution

People Tree is a fairtrade fashion pioneer, which has been going since 1991. It makes its clothes from environmentally friendly materials, as well as ensuring the highest ethical standards from start to finish

peopletree.co.uk

Keep pushing for change

Read

Mending Matters by
Katrina Rodabaugh

Katrina's latest book offers quick and easy tips to get started on your mending journey. From patches to stealthy repairs, Katrina covers techniques and how-tos, alongside her essays and thoughts on her slow, sustainable approach to fashion. A really enjoyable read.

katrinarodabaugh.com

Listen

Wardrobe Crisis podcast

Clare Press is the show's presenter, author and *Vogue Australia*'s sustainability editor-at-large. As global ambassador for the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's Make Fashion Circular initiative, she's well-placed to discuss everything from fashion waste, clothing ethics and upcycling with her selection of top guests. Don't miss it.

clarepress.com/podcast

Watch

The True Cost

This hard-hitting documentary about clothing and the people who make them is a must-watch. The film shines a light on unethical manufacturing processes and its victims, as well as the environmental damage the Earth is suffering as a result. Difficult but essential viewing.

truecostmovie.com

Do

Wash your clothes at 30°C

It's said to be just as hygienic as 40°C, but it saves electricity and protects colours. Line dry items if possible, as a tumble dryer can damage clothes. If you don't have outside space, consider investing in a heated clothes dryer.

specialises in natural fibres, hand knitted and hand dyed with natural products. Not Perfect Linen (**etsy.com/shop/notPERFECTLINEN**) is a family-run brand making stunning clothes from OEKO-TEX certified linen fabric. Green Shoes (**greenshoes.co.uk**) are beautiful, ethical and handmade shoes created by a team in a Devon studio. Whether you choose leather or vegan materials, they're all repairable, which cuts down on waste. Birdsong (**birdsong.london**) states: "We connect women, from worker to wearer," promising products from no sweatshops and using no Photoshop. Birdsong works solely with women's groups and charities to produce its clothing, and everyone is paid above the London Living Wage.

DIY CLOTHING

If you'd like to take matters into your own hands, creating clothing yourself offers multiple benefits: you know exactly how something's made, you can select environmentally friendly materials, and it's a mindful process to enjoy. Merchant and Mills (**merchantandmills.com**) sells a variety of Tencel (the brand name for Lyocell and Modal) fabrics, while Offset Warehouse (**offsetwarehouse.com**) stocks organic cotton, Modal silk jersey, Ramie and Abaca (pineapple-leaf fabric) at one-metre minimums.

When it comes to patterns, shops like Ray Stitch (**raystitch.co.uk**) and Drapers Daughter (**drapersdaughter.com**) stock a wealth of fabric options, along with designs from independent pattern companies.

Ultimately, though, whatever approach you decide upon – whether you're creating items to treasure and repairing them when needed, or buying better-quality clothes made using ethical and sustainable production methods – these little or big actions will all help keep garments out of landfill and in our wardrobes for longer.

© Getty Images; People Tree

© Getty Images

Ditch the tech

Andréa Childs discovers why ditching tech could help you create a happier, healthier home

The living room has taken on an ambient blue glow; pools of light illuminating the faces of my family. I'd like to say it's the result of artistic lighting. In fact, it's the reflected shine of our various screens. My husband is scrolling the cricket scores on his phone; my daughter is plugged into the iPad watching cake-making videos; my son is on the laptop, doing maths homework while messaging friends about a party at the weekend. I'm 'working', otherwise known as getting distracted by Facebook posts from friends I barely talk to face to face.

"I'm a big fan of technology; it has huge potential to enhance our lives. But the tech designed to enable has begun to enslave us, having an impact on our relationships and physical and mental health," says digital entrepreneur Tanya Goodin. "It's time for it to go back in its place, as a tool to be used when we need it and put away when we don't." Tanya's spent her working life onscreen as owner of one of the UK's first digital marketing agencies, but she also founded digital detox specialists itstimetologoff.com, runs retreats to help us rebalance our relationship with technology, and has written books about it. "Most of us aren't addicted to our phones or devices, despite the headlines, but we've developed bad habits around them. We need to set boundaries."

That's easier said than done. In the UK, adults check their phones around 33 times a day and spend more than two hours a day on them (30 days a year). A third of us reach for them within five minutes of waking, and roughly the same number check them during the night. That's not to mention the lost hours spent compiling Pinterest mood boards or bidding on eBay. For shopping, research, tracking our energy use and putting our heating on technology is awesome. But there's a reason we feel anxious when we leave our phones at home, or find it hard to ignore the pings of our devices, even as we're having dinner or reading to our kids. The 'persuasive technology' of social media notifications, the automatic playing of the next Netflix or YouTube video, the validation of 'likes' and stream of news stories feed a sense of reward (the anticipation of clicking on something good can trigger the release of the feel-good chemical dopamine) and fuel a fear of missing out.

DIGITAL DETOX

Science journalist Catherine Price wrote *How To Break Up With Your Phone* when she realised hers had become a "partner in a dysfunctional relationship: something with the power to make me feel bad about myself and to keep me coming back for more." She began with a 24-hour digital detox, when she and her partner avoided all phones, tablets and computers. They enjoyed it so much, they made it a regular event. "Without the distraction, time seemed to slow. We read books, walked and talked," she says. "The effects lingered for a few days afterward – a digital hangover that actually felt good."

BE MORE IN CONTROL

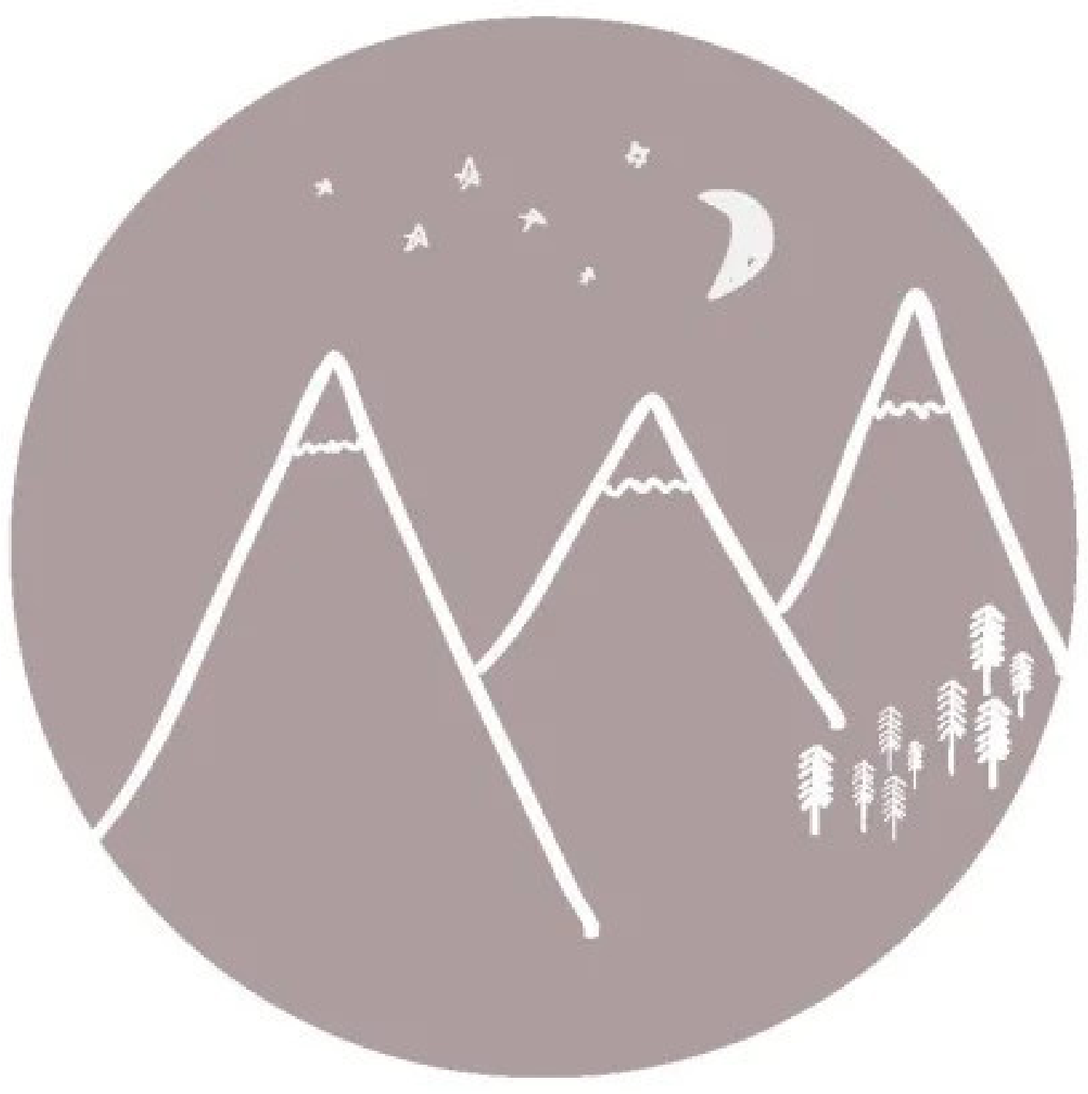
To share that sense of peace and connection, I've recalibrated the digital life of my family. We've never allowed my son to have his phone in his room overnight. I've banished my own phone downstairs, too. I used to scan the news before breakfast – not a feel-good way to start the day. I've changed to a fix of headlines at lunch and my mood is much better. Also, I've followed Tanya's advice and switched off notifications. "It means you check your devices consciously, rather than being reactive," she explains. "What surprises people is how little they miss out on; those alerts rarely need to be responded to in the moment."

This type of technology is so new, we're still learning to cope with its impact and implications. "With tech, we're making up the rules as we go along," says Tanya. "It's not about returning to dial-up phones and analogue TV, but we need to find a balance in our homes and lives that makes us happy."

10 tech-free activities

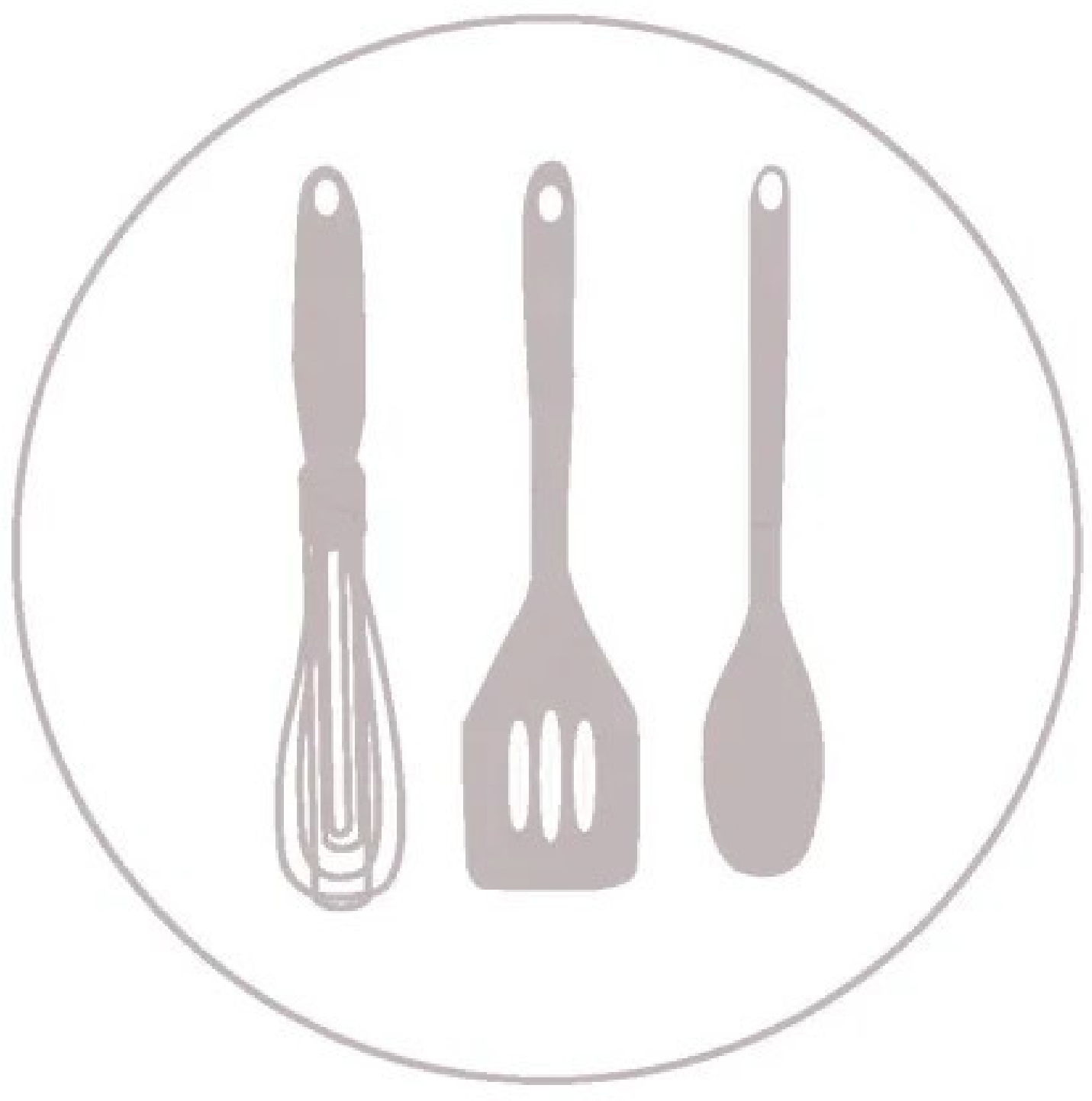
Make the most of your time away from technology and try some of these ideas to improve your wellbeing, sleep and health

We know unplugging from the digital world is good for us. Spending time away from your phone helps balance your mental health and wellbeing, as well as improve relationships. But if you're used to being online on a regular basis, the initial silence can be overwhelming. We've put together some activities to help get you started.



GET OUTSIDE

Walking is such a beneficial way to exercise, but often overlooked in favour of faster forms of fitness. Pop on some comfortable shoes and just start walking, no need for a plan. Take in the sounds and sights around you, which will calm the mind.



COOK A MEAL

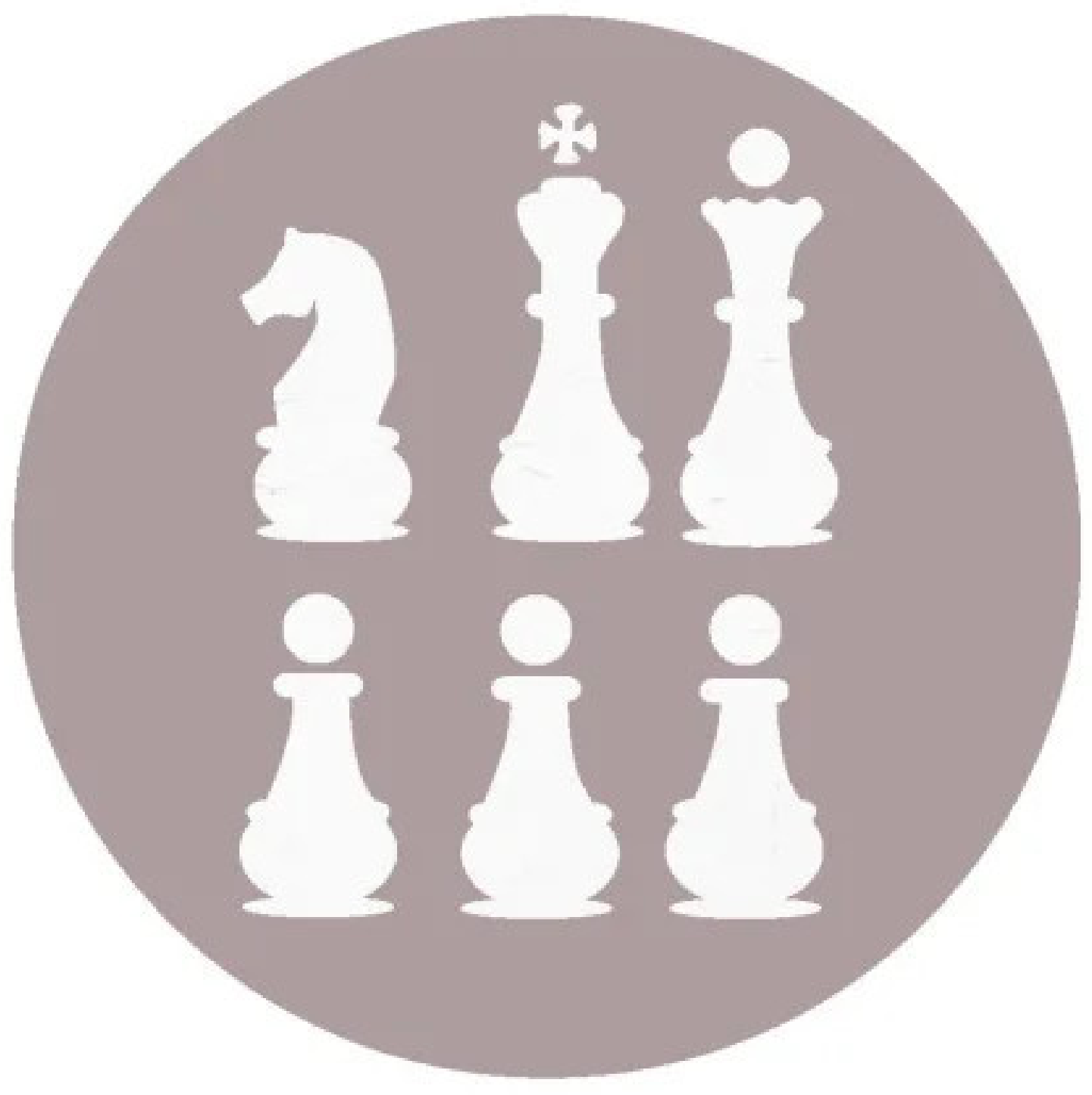
We have to eat every day, but how often do you cook a proper meal from scratch? Spend time planning a menu, go out to buy the right ingredients and cook every element with love. It requires a level of focus that switches off everything else in your brain.

VISIT A MUSEUM OR GALLERY

If you're in a city or large town, you've probably got a museum or gallery of some kind. Many of these cultural attractions are free or low-cost. The quiet environments help soothe the soul, and you can learn something new at the same time.

GO TO THE LIBRARY

Take a trip to the peaceful confines of your local library and have a browse through the books. You might find something to read you'd never considered before. This is also great to do with kids to help them explore a wide range of titles.



PLAY A BOARD GAME

This is a brilliant way to spend a night with friends or family. Pick old classics or try something new. Board games are a lot of fun, bring out a friendly competitiveness and are great for bonding.

Home
Ireland

DRIVE SOMEWHERE NEW

Set out on a road trip with no destination in mind. Crank up your favourite tunes and just see where the road takes you. Pull over and take a look at anything interesting – you're not on a timetable.

DECLUTTER

Decluttering might not sound like the most fun way to spend your time, but it can be immensely therapeutic. Pick one cupboard or drawer you've been meaning to sort out and get it done! You could donate or sell what you don't need, too.

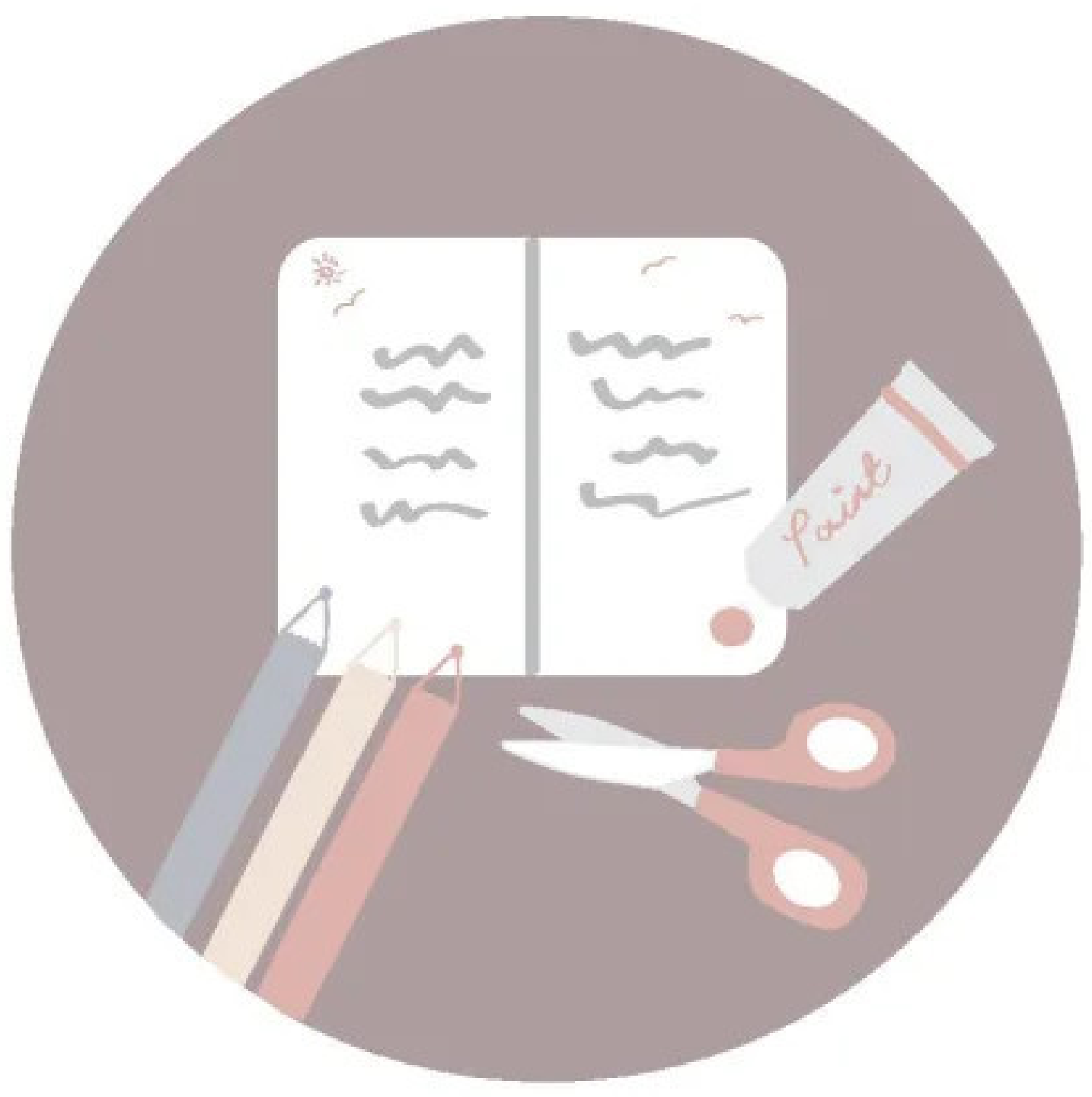
HAVE A REST

Find a cosy spot, indoors or out, and make yourself comfortable. Let your mind wander and drift, focusing on nothing in particular. Just sitting and being still is something we rarely find time for, but it is very good for both mind and body.

HOLA!
HELLO! CIAO!

TRY SOMETHING NEW

Learning a new skill, language or craft can help keep your mind active, while also switching off all that everyday stress. Even if it's just hitting a new gym class or doing a puzzle, the challenge keeps you on your toes.



COLOUR IT IN

Colouring is a perfect mindful activity for adults and children alike. It can help to reduce stress and make you feel more relaxed. Unleashing your creativity is very satisfying, and it's something the whole family can take part in.

© Illustrations by Laurie Newman

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Travel & Nature

"Look deep into nature, and
then you will **understand**
everything better"

– ALBERT EINSTEIN –

Camper dreamin'

Sarah Bankes chats to road trippers, adventurers and weekend warriors Izzy and Laurie to see how they turned their camper-van dream into a reality

Izzy and Laurie live for the weekends. Working hard Monday to Friday, the couple well and truly make the most of their two days off a week, and plan as many breaks away in 'Yosemite', their much-loved camper van, as they can. Whether it's road tripping, hiking, climbing or just being at one with nature, Izzy tells us how they manage to balance a freedomistic lifestyle on the road with everyday responsibilities at home, and how fulfilling they find this way of living.

Q What made you want to own a camper van in the first place?

A Our greatest love has always been to travel. Everyone who knows us, knows we are always planning the next big adventure. Over recent years, the focus of our travels began to be less about new countries and cultures and more about losing ourselves in the Great Outdoors. We swapped hostels for camper-van rentals and took to the roads to feed our travel bug. We fell in love with the lifestyle and were instantly hooked!

We started dreaming of having our own camper van but it always felt like a pipe dream. Then in 2016, we started climbing. We found ourselves camping most weekends, pitching our tent after a long day on the rock, only to wake up the next morning and take it back down again. Suddenly owning our own camper moved from 'pipe dream' to 'total necessity', so we decided to just get on and do it.

Q Why did you decide to build the camper van yourselves, and what advantages has this had on your experiences?

A For every camper-van holiday, we would rent a new style of van, and one of our favourite campfire conversations would be what we'd do and what we wouldn't do if we had a camper van of our own. Without realising it, we were forming an image of our perfect van, which could only be achieved if we built it ourselves.

The beauty of building your own van means that it's exactly how you want it. Our storage fits all our climbing gear, our large kitchen reflects our love of cooking, our massive fridge reflects our love of cold beer, and our bed is so comfy that we sleep better in the van than we do at home. Having a place for everything means we fit in a tonne of stuff but still have a beautiful space to hang out in. We've poured so much of ourselves into the build that it really does feel like a home away from home.

Q Tell us how camping is part of your lifestyle, and how you balance it with everyday life and responsibilities. What kinds of adventures, big and small, do you get up to?

A We both have busy working lives running our own businesses. Laurie is a tree surgeon and I am a therapist, which means our weekdays can be pretty hectic. One thing we've worked hard at over the years is developing the right work-play balance. We are big believers in living life to the full, and for us that means not letting our responsibilities take over and get in the way of having fun. I joke by calling us 'weekend warriors' because sometimes it feels like that. Don't get me wrong, we love our jobs and weekday home life, but we can't wait for the weekends when we can hit the road, lose ourselves in the Great Outdoors and break free from our working weeks.

Most weekends you'll find us taking the van down to the coast to go rock climbing on the sea cliffs. There is no better feeling than chilling out in the van after a long day on the rock. If we're not climbing we'll be walking, riding, paddle boarding or simply parked up somewhere in nature soaking it all in. As long as we're outdoors, we're happy.

And of course there are the bigger adventures too. When we hit the road for weeks at a time exploring new and

© Camper Dreamin'; Getty Images

"People don't take trips, trips take people"

- JOHN STEINBECK -

exciting places. Each day is filled with a new adventure and each night pitching up somewhere different. Living the simple life on the road is when we truly feel free.

Q How does camper-van life help you to switch off and recharge the batteries?

A The best thing about camper-van life for us is the freedom it gives. Our means to escape is parked up outside our house, ready and waiting to go at a moment's notice. The moment we turn the key in the ignition at the start of each road trip, no matter how big or small, it's like we are turning off the pressure of our working lives. With every mile we drive, we can feel our souls coming alive and our batteries recharging. We talk of adventures and happy things. Some of our greatest and daftest plans have come from our road-trip chats.

When we hit the road, we embark on a simpler way of life. We disconnect from our phones and reconnect with nature. We live completely in the moment. We get satisfaction from taking time to complete simple activities that can be done so quickly and without thought at home. Our favourite way to spend an evening is around a campfire. One of us will forage for wood and build the fire while the other prepares the food. Then we'll relax around the fire reflecting on our day, taking it in turns to tend to the flame or stir the dinner. There is something about cooking and eating outdoors that makes food taste so much better than if it were cooked at home.

Q Can you tell us about a stand-out moment or experience you've had on the road?

A A few Christmases ago, snow was forecasted to arrive in the Peak District. Laurie and I are both big kids when it comes to snow, so we hit the road the night before it was due, to try and hunt some down. We parked up at one of our favourite wild-camp spots and did a little snow dance before we went to sleep.

When we woke, we were in a winter wonderland. If you know of the beauty of Hope Valley, just imagine it covered in white. The conditions meant no one else could get to our park-up, so we had it all to ourselves.

We spent the day walking in the snowy hills and then bundled into our cosy little van to warm up with tea and cake. It was the perfect day. By the time the evening arrived so had the 4x4s, who offered to tow us out. We politely refused. We may have been snowed in but that didn't bother us one bit!

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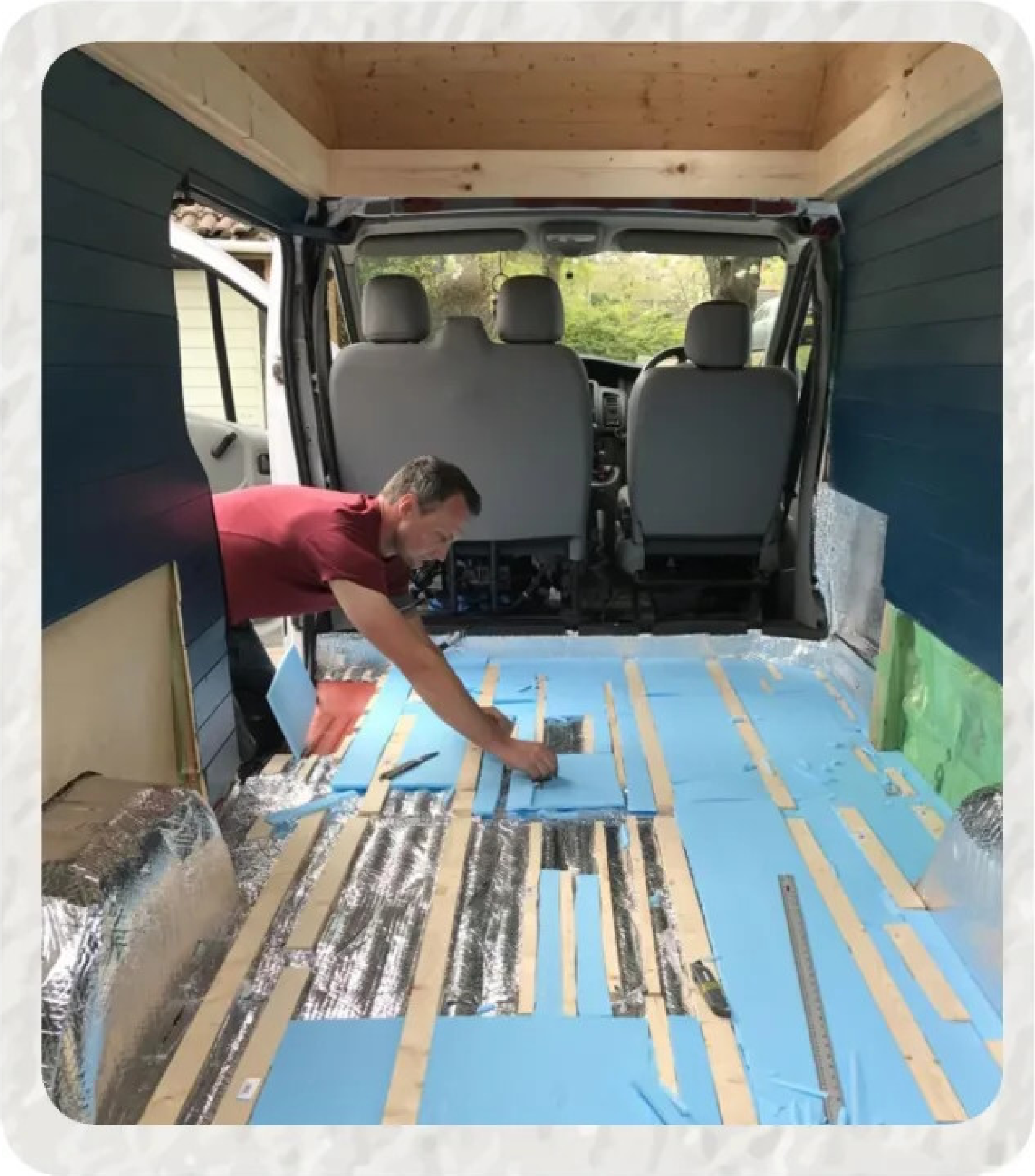
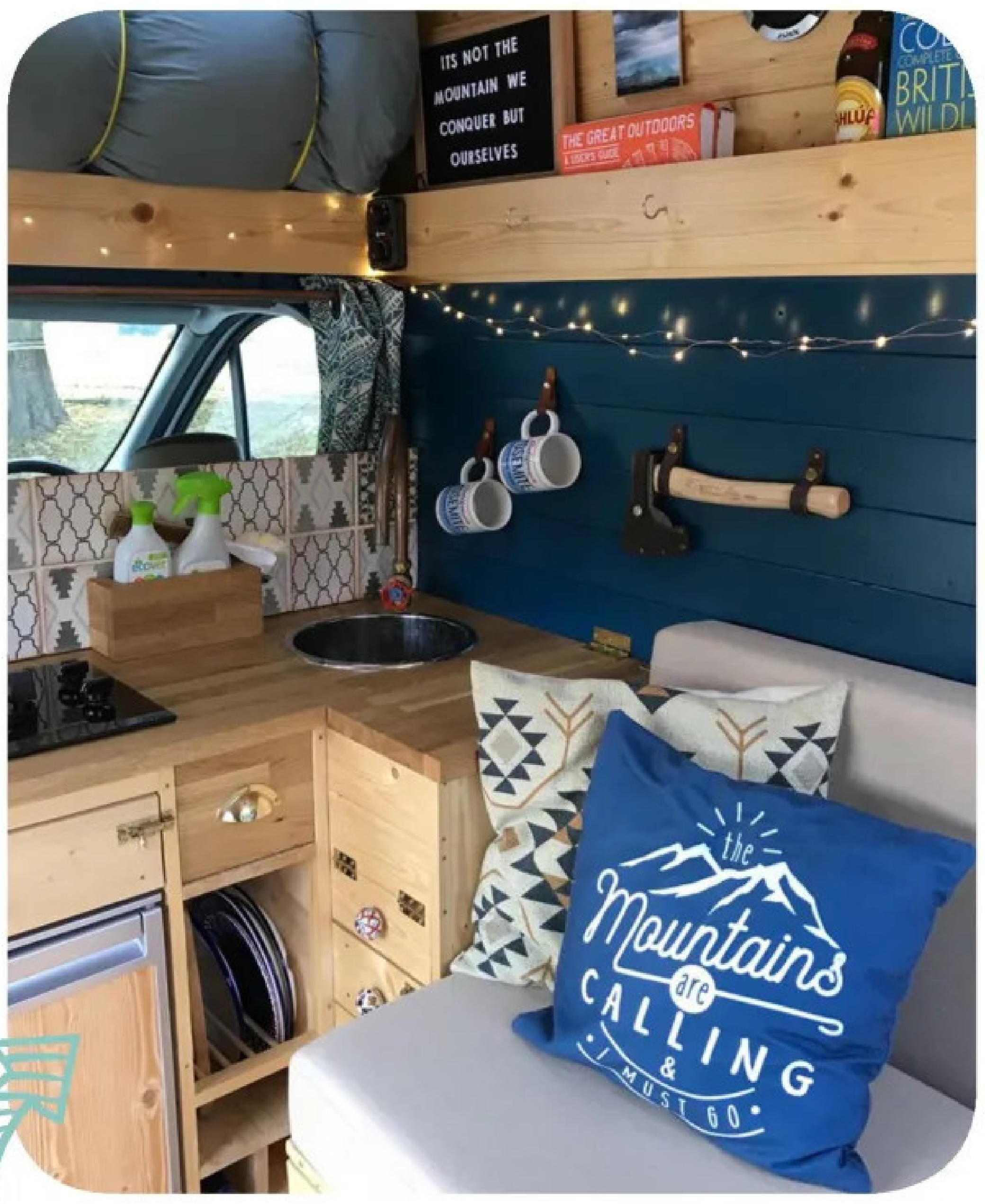
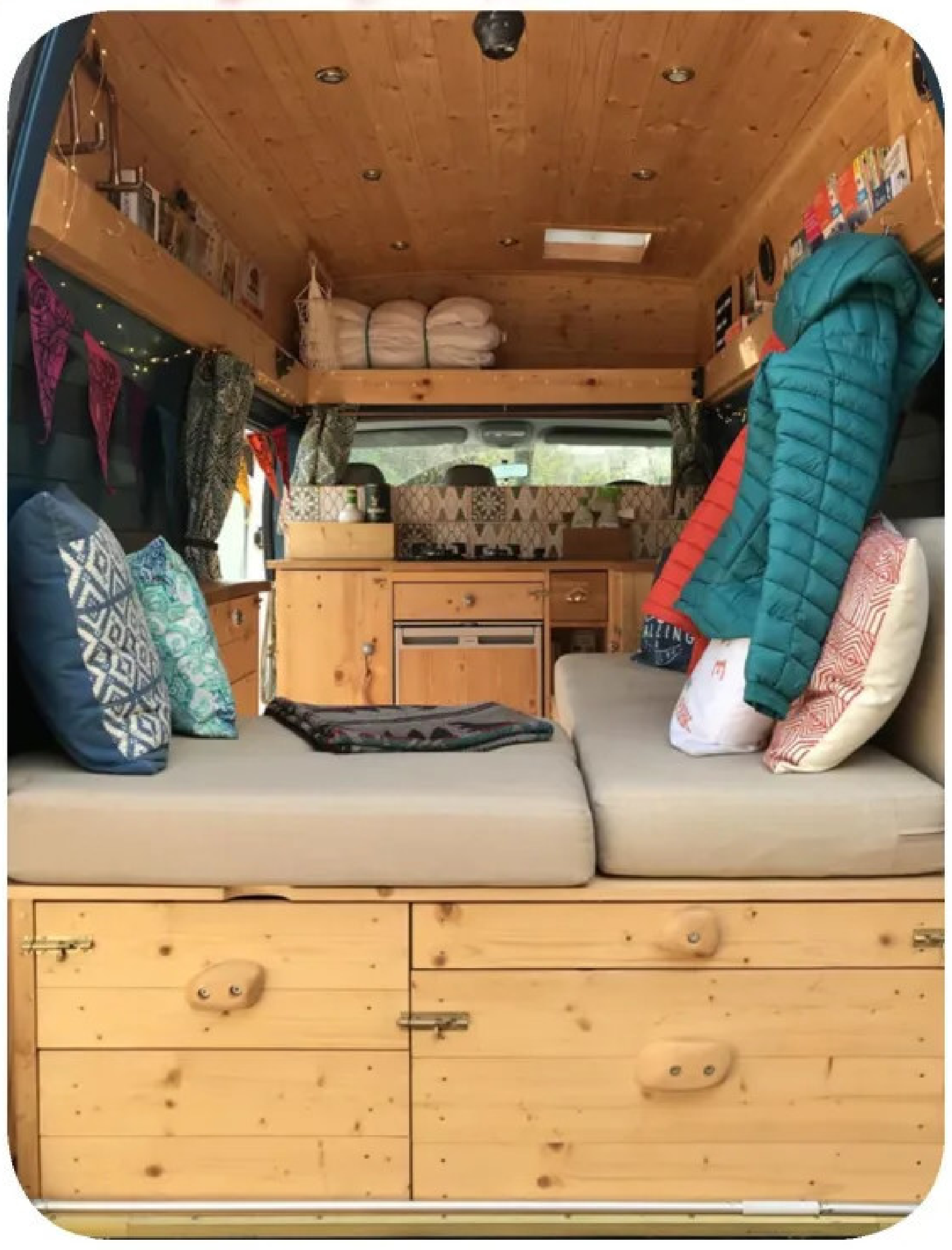
Before



> "Live, travel, **adventure**, bless, and don't be sorry"
>
> - JACK KEROUAC -


IT'S NOT THE MOUNTAIN WE CONQUER BUT OURSELVES
THE GREAT OUTDOORS
the Mountains are CALLING & I MUST GO

EMITE
Est. 1890
TIONAL PARK



After

Noticing nature

Sarah Gane discovers why stopping to smell the roses is good for the mind and body

Ever feel like your week is on fast-forward? Whether you work, run your own business, have a family, pets, hobbies or all of the above, there's no doubt life moves pretty fast. Sometimes it can be tricky to catch our breath. However, by stepping away from the 'busy-ness' for a minute, stopping to look around and moving our focus onto the natural world, we can find beautiful moments of mindfulness that not only help recharge ourselves, but also encourage a fresh perspective on life's challenges.

THE POSITIVES

It's one of the reasons why the Japanese art of 'Shinrin yoku' – or forest bathing – is becoming such a popular form of relaxation. According to Forestry England (**forestryengland.uk**): "The simple method of being calm and quiet amongst the trees, observing nature around you whilst breathing deeply can help both adults and children de-stress and boost health and wellbeing in a natural way." Search for your nearest woodland or forest on its website, and download its handy guide to get started.

Nevertheless, you don't need to wander out into the wilderness to see the benefits. You can start where you are. Whether you're sitting in a park, taking a walk on the beach, or even just in your own garden, paying attention to your thoughts, breath or the flora and fauna surrounding you is a meditative process in itself and incredibly calming.

OBSERVE THE SEASONS

The beauty of nature is it's always changing; a reminder, if it were needed, of life's impermanence. It's pointless trying to hang on to anything. Everything moves in seasons and cycles, with each little gem given its own time to shine. But did you know that getting outdoors can offer health benefits? According to research by the NHS, positives include lowering blood pressure, improving mood and a better ability to focus. Just 30 minutes of exercise a day is said to help reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and even cancer. It's also why the wellbeing organisation Action For Happiness (**actionforhappiness.org**) champions it through its 10 Keys To Happier Living, encouraging us to live a more mindful life by noticing the little things on our way.

HOW TO GET STARTED

So, with that in mind, if you're heading outside on a lunch break, or getting off the bus or train a few stops early on the way home, why not take a journal out with you to make a note of what you can see, hear and feel around you? Are there any birds or other creatures scampering or flying about? Does it feel chilly or warm outside? What can you hear around you? If you're at the beach, maybe take a peek in some rock pools, look for interesting shells or simply dig your feet into the sand. This tiny sliver of time helps us to reconnect with the ground beneath our feet and our surroundings.

Once you've tried that, another technique of noticing and exploring nature could be to pick a leaf, flower or pebble and simply sit with it for a few minutes. Hold it in front of you and *really* study it. Does it have any marks or chunks missing? What colour is it? Think about the texture – how does it feel beneath your fingertips? Any other notable features? Can you sketch a version of it in your journal?

Or, if you're in the city without green space around you, look to the skies. Observe the types of clouds above you, see how they're moving and welcome this opportunity for your mind to drift along with them.

© Getty Images

Embracing different cultures

Alice Barnes-Brown offers expert advice on overcoming culture shock to ensure you get the most out of your travel experiences

Part of the joy of travelling is experiencing new cultures, traditions and ways of life. You can immerse yourself in a whole new world, try different things and see places far away from home. But it can also be a bit of a challenge when what you find is markedly different to what you're used to, or a little out of your comfort zone. Feeling a bit overwhelmed is common among first-time travellers.

It's got a name, too: culture shock. You might hear or read about it before you travel, but you never think it'll happen to you. Many of us think that because we know our stuff about the places we travel to, we're prepared for anything. But in reality, even the most experienced adventurers can suffer from a few unexpected surprises on the road.

For example, you may encounter anything from a different set of table manners to an entirely new daily routine, making you feel a bit out of place in your latest destination. There's no 'one size fits all' to travelling, and every country has its own unique and highly developed culture, so it's impossible to prescribe a complete remedy for culture shock. Some things you'll like and some things you might not, but it's all an experience.

If you struggle with the local language, or your native one is not widely spoken, the feeling of being an outsider might be exacerbated. If it gets really bad, it's natural to want to curl up and get away from it all for a while. But don't worry, we've got all the information you need to get you raring to go out there again and make the most of your trip.

RESEARCH AND RESPECT

The best thing you can do to get rid of culture shock is respect the local culture. If it's appropriate, try to assimilate wherever possible. Accepting that some places do things differently to others is all part of the enriching experience that travelling provides. And, pragmatically, you don't want to stand out from the crowd and reveal yourself to be a tourist – as well as earning some of the locals' respect, you avoid marking yourself out as an easy target for petty crime, like theft.

So, in order to learn about what to expect before you even hit the ground, read up on it. The internet is filled with tonnes of useful information about the places you're visiting. Blogs and videos from people who have been there, done that, are a fantastic place to start. Be careful though – what's easy enough for them may not be comfortable for you, so do a bit of digging to find a blog with a similar perspective to your own.

To get more of the basics, and to find out if there are any particular things for people of your nationality to watch out for, check out your government's foreign office website and search for the countries you're visiting. Here you can get a good idea of how you might be perceived abroad (and any risks involved) if you behaved the same way you would at home. Bear in mind that official advice can often be overcautious – it's good to know and take on board, but don't be put off by it.

If you prefer a more relaxing and less-technological research mission, hunt down some travel books. They're hugely enjoyable reads, and their authors provide unparalleled insight into the mindset of local people. The writers often spend a considerable amount of time getting to know and participating in the cultures they are writing about.

INEQUALITIES

Another thing that could shock you is the inequality you might encounter in some societies. Whether it's between rich and poor, men and women, ethnic groups, sexualities and so on, you are bound to be confronted with some form of discrimination. You may be required to change your behaviour to blend in, even if you don't necessarily agree with it.

Women are more susceptible to prejudice when travelling, so may fall victim to culture shock a bit easier, as they are not always afforded the same level of respect as back home. For instance, if you're a woman travelling in a particularly religious country, you may be expected to partially or fully cover your body – including your head. If you're a woman travelling solo, you will sometimes need to be wary of speaking to men by yourself, as this may be frowned upon. Additionally, in some places you may find it comfortable to pretend to be married, in order to ward off sexual harassment. Sadly, the

Common mistakes

Keeping your shoes on

In people's homes, public buildings and religious sites around the world, it's often offensive to keep your shoes on, as you are bringing dirt from the outside world into a much-loved space. Always ask your hosts if you need to remove footwear; if others are doing it, make sure you follow suit.

Using your left hand

You might find that some places are a bit superstitious about the use of the left hand. This is often especially true when it pertains to eating, as the left hand is conventionally used for bathroom purposes in some cultures. If you're left-handed, bear this in mind when you travel.

Offensive hand gestures

Hand gestures are tricky, and we're bound to make mistakes sometimes. For instance, what looks like an innocent 'peace' sign can be insulting when flipped the other way around, especially in places such as the UK, Australia, India and other Commonwealth countries. Just read up and be careful!

The laws and customs of a place can be deeply shaped by faith

discrimination might not end there. LGBTQ+ people can experience trouble in conservative countries where their relationships and sexualities are not fully accepted, so this is something to bear in mind before you go. People with disabilities, as well as people from different ethnic backgrounds and religious views, might have to navigate their own sets of problems. But if you're a keen traveller, you can surmount these issues and still have an incredible time.

POLITICS AND RELIGION

Indeed, politics can be a touchy issue when travelling, and not just at border control. In many authoritarian and monarchical countries, while you might be keen to get the scoop on what it's like to live in that particular country, its subjects might be decidedly quiet on the topic. Be sensitive and don't push them – they might be afraid something bad will happen to them if they criticise the government. If you really want to know what it's like, make your own observations while you're there – but if the political situation is strained, be careful not to fall foul of the authorities.

As religion can play an important role in any society, it's key that you read up on the religious makeup of where you're going. The laws and customs of a place can be deeply shaped by faith, so it's really important to respect the beliefs of local people. If you're travelling during the time of a holy festival or event, you can observe how people celebrate, and much of the time you'll be encouraged to join in. Whether that's ringing in the Chinese New Year, throwing coloured paint during Holi, or eating your weight in food during Eid, you'll find that religious festivals can be a wonderful time to really get to know where you're exploring.

However, sometimes religious festivals and events can affect how you travel. During the holidays, you can expect many places to be closed or operating on irregular hours. If you're in need of urgent snacks or travel supplies, you may be caught short. You can easily find out whether religious holidays will affect you by heading to the internet and seeing what other travellers say. On rare occasions, you may be expected to behave a certain way, too. For instance, during Ramadan, it may be advisable not to eat in public during daylight hours. This will avoid unnecessarily offending anyone who is fasting – and it will save you a lot of money on eating out, too!

You might also get over your culture shock a bit quicker if you dress a little more like the locals. Whether it's because you're getting a few stares because you haven't dressed modestly enough, or maybe you've just seen the locals out and about looking lovely in traditional clothing, you might feel the need to change up your wardrobe. In many places around the world, Western clothing is normalised and widely worn – particularly by young people – but in some destinations it can be more practical and fun to ditch your jeans and try out the local garb. Head to the nearest market or shopping centre to pick some up.

FOOD AND DRINK

Another thing you might be a bit startled by when travelling is all the new kinds of food you'll encounter. Embarking on a tasty adventure is all part of your journey, but you may find that food in other countries isn't quite to your taste. After all, every culture puts its own unique spin on dishes and the experience of eating in general. For example, some places might have a higher tolerance to spice than back home, so if you order spicy food it may be wise to ask for the heat to be taken down a notch. Even if you think you can handle it, it's better to be safe and enjoy your meal, than sorry and unable to finish it.

If you have certain dietary requirements, you might struggle to find the food you usually consume at home. However, supermarkets are generally well stocked with anything you may need, regardless of where you are in the world. If you have a specific diet you need to follow then self-catering might be a better option for you. Plus, a look around your local supermarket is a fun way to find out what the locals really like to eat. You might even find familiar things there to remind you of home.

With food and drink often come new conventions for etiquette and table

Packing essentials

Shawls

Whether you need it to cover your head and shoulders before you go into a religious site, or simply to protect yourself from the sun when it gets a bit hot, a shawl is one of the most versatile things a traveller can pack. You can also buy ones adorned with traditional patterns in the local market, and start a fun collection of global shawls.

Phrasebook

Although English is widely spoken around the world, you'll often come across people who cannot speak the language. Don't worry – just take a pocket-sized phrasebook with you. You can speak from it, or if you're really struggling, point to phrases written inside. The other person will understand what you mean.

Something from home

While travelling is incredibly fun, there's no denying that when you're feeling the culture shock, homesickness can hit you hard. Make sure you take something from home – like a lucky item or favourite trinket – to bring you a little bit of comfort and joy when you're away.

manners, such as only eating with your right hand, or getting to grips with new utensils. Wherever you go, try to do as the locals do. If you have a host or a guide to help you out, then closely copy what they're doing. In places like East Asia, many backpackers find it tricky to understand intricate eating formalities, so try to be as polite as possible and take things slowly. In other places, it's customary to eat with your hands, which may also be new to you. In any case, explain that you're keen to learn the proper way to dine – many people will totally understand that you are new there and be keen to show you how it's done.

If having an alcoholic drink or two is something you like to do when you're abroad, get to know the local laws and customs concerning alcohol. As well as taking the usual precautions you would at home – keeping an eye on your drink at all times and being sure not to drink too much – it's worth noting how alcohol is viewed. Excessive drinking might be frowned upon; in many places being drunk in public is punished very harshly. In a few deeply religious countries, you might not be able to buy alcohol at all. But wherever you are, respect the culture by drinking in moderation and you'll still have fun. Perhaps some new local friends will give you a taste of their regional tipple, or show you their favourite watering hole.

MANNERS

Another part of human interaction that differs wildly from place to place is manners. Some societies pride themselves on politeness and deference, while others might be more vibrant and insistent. You'll get a good sense for what it's like as you do your research, but always expect the unexpected when travelling – your initial impressions of a place could be completely dashed.

In terms of meeting and interacting with people, always start off by being polite and see how the conversation goes. When you meet people for the first time, look out for any customary greetings you should use. Whether it's a short bow or a firm handshake, do your best to return any gesture that comes your way. There's nothing wrong with being too formal, and nothing worse than seeming rude.

You may also be expected to show more reverence for older people than you otherwise would at home. This is because elders are often seen as wise and authoritative, people whose superior experience of life affords them respect. That might include using their formal titles, or not speaking to them out of turn. If in doubt, smile, try your best and apologise if you think you've made a mistake – everyone is human!

At the other end of the scale, you might get to a place and think it's a bit overly touchy-feely. If you're not used to being hugged, pecked on the cheek or heavily patted when you meet someone new, you'll be a bit taken aback by friendly societies where this is commonplace. But if you don't detect weird vibes from someone, this could be a great opportunity to get accustomed to such affectionate behaviour and to open yourself up to new experiences.

EMBRACE THE DIFFERENCES

One of the most authentic encounters you can have while travelling is a visit to the mazes of shops and stalls that form the marketplace. From the souks of North Africa to the floating markets of Thailand, across the world there's always a place where people go to grab a bargain and check out local products. It's a great place to see a cross-section of a country's produce and people.

However, something many backpackers and travellers struggle with is the practice of haggling. For many Western countries, it simply isn't done – the price is nearly always fixed as it's labelled. When you go to a place where haggling is commonplace (which covers most places, except northwest Europe and North America), it might seem rude to offer a lower price than the seller tells you, but don't be afraid – it's expected! You'd probably get a funny look if you agreed to the first price (especially as it's likely to have been set above the actual value). It can be intimidating to try, but haggling is never personal. Start off with a price that's a quarter or a half of what the seller initially suggests, and aim to meet somewhere at the lower end or in the middle. If they don't budge, walk away and say you can get it at another shop – more often than not, they'll come chasing after you and will offer you a lower price.

Most importantly of all, remember to have fun and really throw yourself into the culture of the place you're visiting. It can often endear you in the eyes of the people you meet there, and you'll become a more rounded person as a result. While the idea of being somewhere completely different from home can be scary, it's also incredibly exciting – and if you do your research, always be respectful and open yourself to new ideas, we're sure you'll have a wonderful time.

© Getty Images

Learn a language

It might seem like a lot of effort, but learning the local lingo before you go anywhere will make your trip so much more special. If you can walk around a place and read some of the signs, or even have a short conversation with somebody, you'll feel less like a run-of-the-mill tourist and more like a real adventurer. Thankfully, these days it's so much easier to learn a new language.

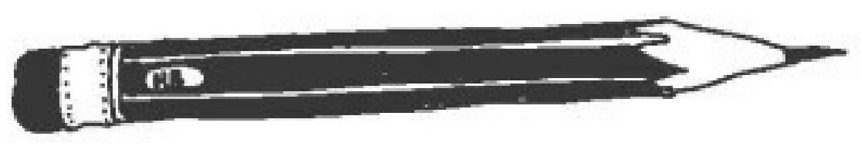
One of the best places to start is YouTube, where you can find lots of beginners' courses in pretty much any language. Here, native speakers will teach you some key phrases and conversation starters. If there's a new writing system to learn, it can help you get to grips with that, too.

For those who would like to get more advanced, you can always do it the old-fashioned way and buy a textbook. As well as learning an extensive vocabulary, you can practise your reading skills and even get a handle on grammar – which can be a thorn in any language learner's side.

If you're always busy, there are apps you can download to your phone that you can use anywhere. One of these is Duolingo (www.duolingo.com), which teaches you basic words and phrases. Or, for a more social alternative, try language exchange app Tandem (www.tandem.net), where you can meet and chat with native speakers, and improve each other's skills, and you might even make a new friend!

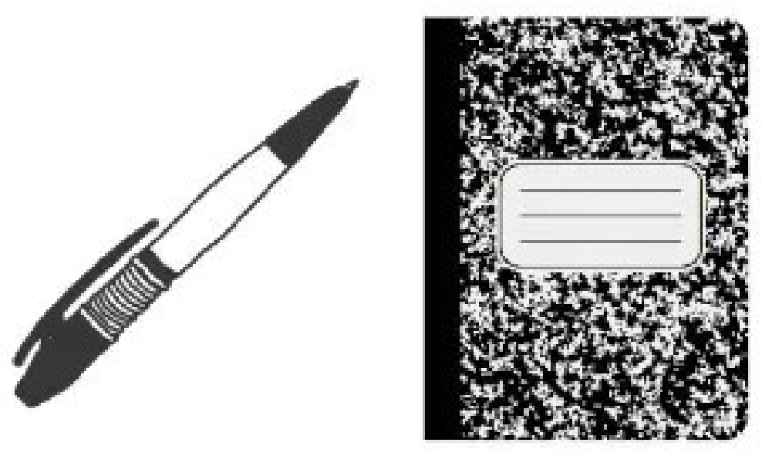
Activities for long journeys

Help pass the time on long journeys with a few of these boredom busters



SKETCH

Whether you are good at drawing or you're a novice, sketching is a great way of visually recording your travels. Make a habit of carrying a few pencils and a sketchbook in your rucksack for moments when you get free time. You can use your time while you are on the move to observe changing scenes from your window. Alternatively, you could work from some of your photographs that you have taken on your travels.

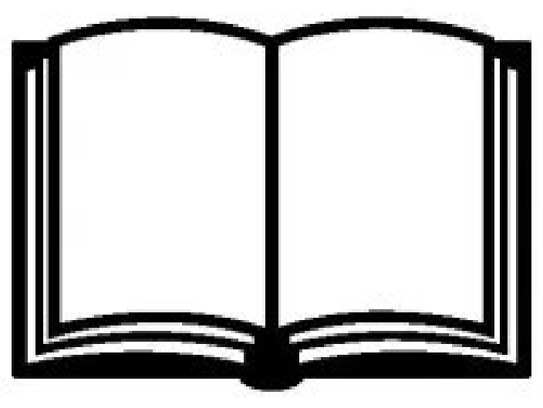


WRITE A DIARY

There is no better way to keep your memories alive than by writing them down on paper. When you are travelling between places try to recap the fantastic moments you've had by jotting them down in a diary. The best thing about a diary is that once you return you can read back through your adventures and remind yourself of all the highlights of your unforgettable trip.

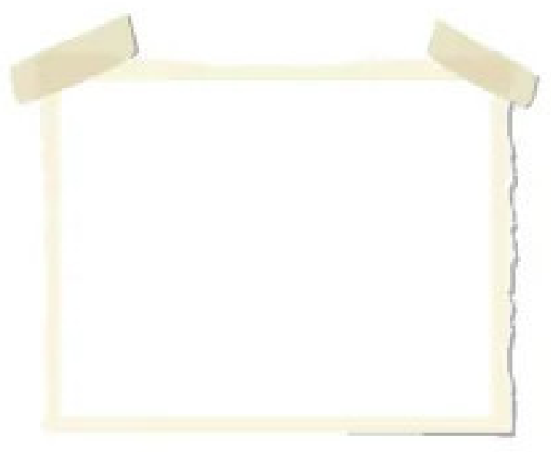
PLAY CARDS

A timeless classic for any long journey. Try to grab yourself a seat on a train with a table so that you can play a variety of games with others. Noteworthy games that are worth a couple of rounds are: Rummy, Patience and Go Fish. Travelling alone? Solitaire is a great game to play on your own to bide your time.



READ

If you've got time to kill then reading is the answer to any long journey. Lose yourself in an adventure, a mystery, or even some poetry. While you are away make use of communal book shelves in hostels as they offer good book swaps. This also saves you from lugging around extra books! If you are an avid reader and expect to read a lot on your travels then an e-reader might be more suited to you.



SCRAPBOOK

Scrapbooks are a great way of preserving your happy memories while you're away and can be a fun activity when you're on the move. As you are travelling, why not collect memorabilia and display them in a scrapbook? This can be anything from travel tickets to unwanted currency and photographs. When you have a moment, experiment with sticking them in your scrapbook. Make sure you've got a glue stick to hand!

© Getty Images

"The time will **pass** anyway; we might just as well put that passing time to the **best** possible use"

- EARL NIGHTINGALE -

Eco-friendly travel

While the rewards of wandering the globe are greater than ever before, so too is the responsibility, as Joanne al-Samarae explores

As traditional boundaries to travel continue to disappear, and the world grows increasingly interconnected, more people are exploring the planet than ever before. Despite all of the cultural and financial benefits this brings, travel can have devastating consequences, placing some of the world's most delicate landscapes and cultural gems at risk.

Since international travel exploded in 1950, one million species have become threatened, and vulnerable human populations have been driven to the brink of collapse. Thailand's Maya Bay, virtually unknown a few decades ago, in 2018 became so damaged that the government had to close it indefinitely. In 2016, two-thirds of coral in the northern Great Barrier Reef was declared dead. Peru, meanwhile, has already had to cap visitor numbers at Machu Picchu, due to the substantial damage caused. One day, it may be closed completely, only viewable from afar.

Travel is a wonderful thing when done right; the greatest mind-expanding experience and ultimate cultural bridge. However, it should serve local communities and ecosystems, not exploit them. Once our natural and cultural treasures are destroyed, it will be too late. The burden to protect them falls on every single traveller, and the time is now.

Sitting at the crossroads of environmental, social and economic issues, eco travel focuses on minimising the impact of tourism. For the uninitiated, it covers all the variants of ecotourism and green travel, including responsible travel, sustainable tourism and ethical travel. While these terms are interchangeable and vary wildly, their principles remain steadfast: minimise your impact, tread lightly and always leave a place better than you found it. It also promotes environmental and cultural awareness, contributing to conservation efforts and the socio-economic development of local communities.

Fortunately, eco travel's star is on the rise. As the public becomes better educated about the impact of travel on the planet, more people are committing to minimising their own footprints. Whether that's staying at a resort that farms its own food, travelling by land rather than by air, or choosing parks where fees are funnelled directly to conservation, there are myriad options for seeking out greener holidays, ensuring future generations can experience the wonders of travel for years to come.

HOW TO PICK A DESTINATION

First, when it comes to choosing a destination, not all are created eco-equal. Some demonstrate a much deeper commitment to Earth-friendly policies, community-centred programmes and sustainable practices than others. Unsurprisingly, Nordic countries lead the pack. Meanwhile, Costa Rica has positioned itself as one of the world's most successful ecotourism destinations. Over 25 per cent of its land – from the beaches of Costa Ballena to rainforests teeming with wildlife – is protected.

Among developing nations, Namibia was the first African country to add the protection of the environment to its constitution, placing conservation at its heart. Meanwhile, 97 per cent of the Galápagos Islands are protected by Ecuador's National Parks Service.

Another emerging eco-Mecca is Uzbekistan. The former Soviet stronghold is now home to a flourishing outdoor culture, with hiking, horseback riding, mountaineering, white-water rafting and bird watching aplenty. It also offers a wealth of alternative accommodation, like eco-friendly yurts, homestays and cooperative-run lodges.

To guide you in selecting the right destination, there are countless rankings listing the world's greenest locales. But, it's just as easy to make an informed decision on your own. Locations with extensive public-transport systems, protected parks, walkable neighbourhoods, and a taste for organic

> More people are committing to minimising their own footprints

and local produce are usually safe bets. Just avoid the hysterical call to 'go before it's gone'. Travellers flocking to already endangered areas – such as the low-lying Pacific Islands threatened by rising tides; the last remaining Wonder of the Ancient World (the Great Pyramid of Giza); and disappearing Arctic glaciers – only contributes to their destruction.

TRAVEL GREEN

The next challenge is how to get there. There simply aren't any green ways of flying, and CO_2 emissions per passenger are astronomical. While the aviation industry is developing bio-fuelled aircrafts, the best option available is to minimise and offset as much as possible. It also helps to book direct flights where possible, to avoid unnecessary fuel-guzzling take-offs and landings.

Another factor towards shrinking your carbon footprint is which class you fly. First and Business produce nine and three times more carbon emissions than Economy respectively. In addition to forgoing the extra elbowroom in favour of conservationist class, carbon-offset programs can go some way to counteracting flight emissions. These schemes enable individuals to donate to green projects – like solar farms, deforestation taskforces and wind-turbine production – to compensate for their own carbon footprints. Renewable projects are considered best, as they directly address the chief cause of climate change: fossil fuels.

While carbon offsetting is not a long-term solution to the problem, it is an effective way of mitigating damage, if combined with other responsible travel practices. But, with hundreds of offset schemes available, it's important to choose the right one. Airlines like Qantas, Japan Airlines, Delta and Cathay Pacific directly offer customers a way to offset carbon emissions.

Elsewhere, look for projects that are certified Gold Standard, Verified Carbon Standard, Voluntary Gold Standard or Certified Emission Reduction, which means they meet the Kyoto Protocol guidelines, an international treaty committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Schemes, such as Terrapass, Carbon Footprint, Cool Effect and Atmosfair, offer a dynamic range of certified projects to offset against.

GET AROUND YOUR DESTINATION

How you travel around once you've landed comes with its own quandaries. Cycling, hiking and walking are greenest, but if you need to travel long distances, trains are generally considered environmentally friendly. Buses carrying upward of 40 passengers are the next-best alternative. The most sustainable systems run on electric or alternative power and boast high passenger rates. Switzerland's hydroelectric-powered trains and hybrid buses, along with Japan's lightweight, high-capacity Shinkansen (bullet train), are among the most notable examples.

For seafarers, cruising the open waters can either be a green dream or an environmental disaster. Though sailboats and catamarans are gentle on the planet, cruise ships empty one billion gallons of sewage into the oceans every year, while leaking petrol into fragile ecosystems. To help combat the damage, Norwegian cruise line Hurtigruten is exploring greener pastures with the construction of three hybrid ships. The first of their kind, two are set to make their maiden voyages in late 2019.

WHERE TO STAY

Finding a hotel with an environmental conscience has never been easier, but trusting them with your eco-conscious pennies is more difficult, thanks to less-than-honest proprietors greenwashing their supposed Earth-friendly practices. One way to check out your accommodation's green credentials is through certification programmes. While the Green Hotels Association issues LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certifications to hotels that put environment conservation into practice, Green Key and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council also verify lodgings truly deserving of their eco-warrior status.

Choosing green accommodation doesn't necessarily mean forgoing a hot shower. Instead, travellers should focus on the issues that matter the most to them, and select accommodation that matches those priorities. While eco-lodges and homestays are often the most sustainable options, many hotel chains and independent properties offer green programmes, such as in-room recycling, composting or only sourcing local produce. Small luxury groups, like Aman, Six Senses and Alila, follow rigorous green practices, while mainstream chains like Accor, Rosewood and IHG have implemented sustainability strategies.

Making environmentally friendly decisions throughout a stay is just as important as choosing the right transport and accommodation. If doing laundry is a must, take clothes to a local facility that supports job creation, and ditch disposable water bottles in favour of BPA-free filtration systems, like Grayl, Lifesaver and LifeStraw.

WHAT TO DO

When it comes to sightseeing, there are always plenty of options that are gentle on Mother Nature, like snorkelling, scuba diving, hiking, swimming, kayaking, biking and bird-watching. In addition, visiting craft fairs or markets and purchasing locally produced, artisanal goods supports indigenous communities and farmers – just don't forget to take a reusable bag. When hunger calls, dine at eco-conscious, fair-labour eateries that serve up locally sourced ingredients.

Finally, when hiring tour companies, avoid international operators and opt for local, environmentally friendly businesses that employ, and fairly compensate, local guides. Not only are you empowering the native population and helping to generate income, but you'll get a guide with a deep-rooted knowledge and understanding of the destination, and will receive a more authentic experience.

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Connecting with the Moon

Sarah Gane looks at how being aware of the lunar phases can help us to connect with nature and ourselves

Nature and its cycles form the steady rhythm of this thing we call life. Seasonal shifts of spring and summer through to autumn and winter all bring their own forms of beauty, losses and gains. Each in turn makes way for the new. Yet, some people believe that nature's cycles can extend beyond the physical things we see around us – not just flowers blooming or leaves changing colour, for example – to impact our own sense of wellbeing.

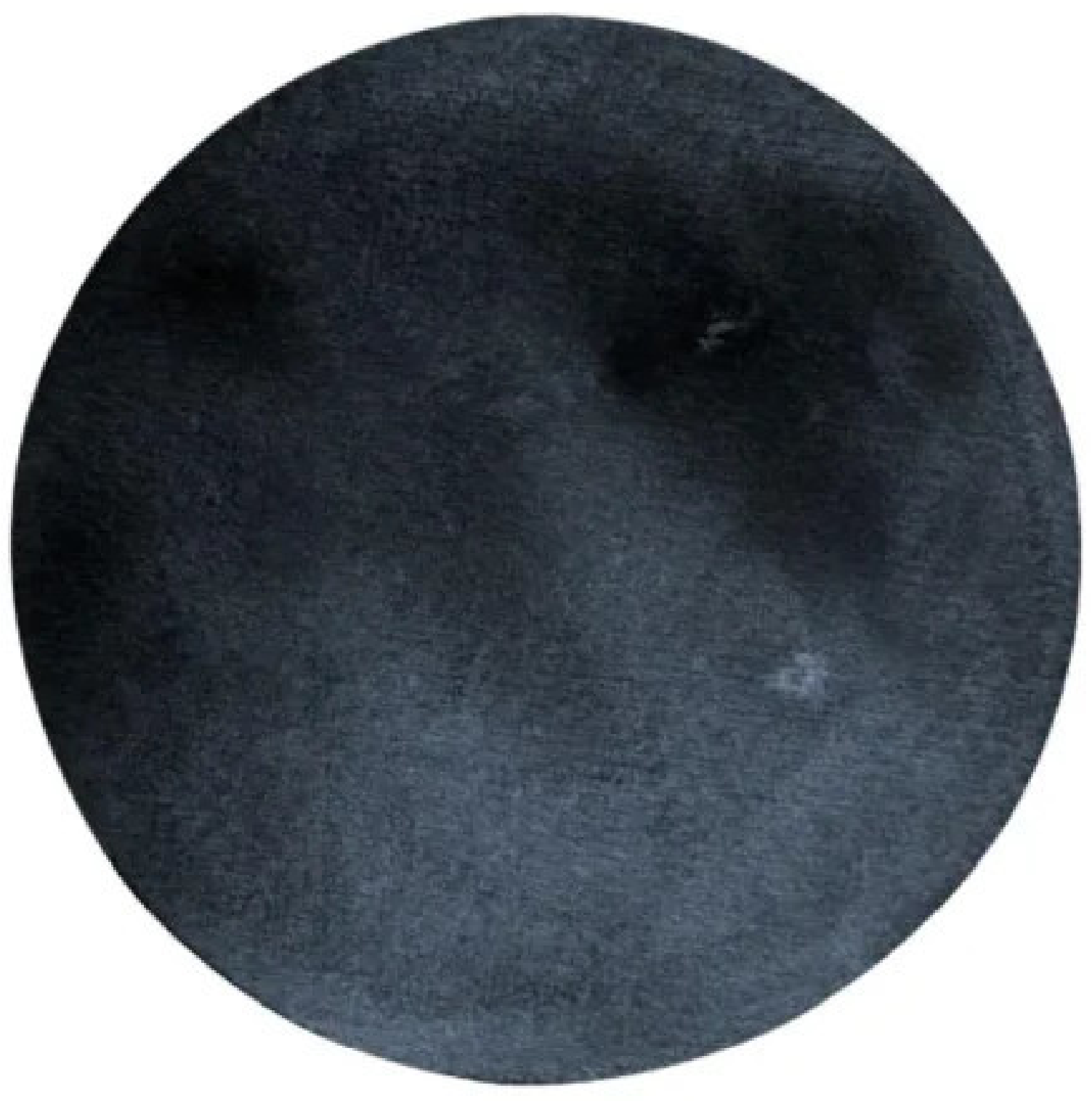
The Moon is one such example. Its cycles have long been used to map out everyday life – whether through changing tides, growing plants, hunting, celebrations, myths, legends and lots more. It's one of the beautiful constants in life that connects us with our natural earth and our ancestors.

The lunar cycle goes through its eight phases over a period of around 30 days. According to NASA: "Our perspective of the Moon's sunlit appearances changes as it orbits Earth." Yet, when it comes to observing the phases, teaming scientific knowledge with a little of our own intuition and self-care practices can actually result in a really positive experience. Essentially, whether you're spiritually minded or not, engaging all of our senses in these observations can really help us to connect with nature and ourselves in a mindful way.

One reason for this could be because seeing the Moon often requires a bit of effort. While the Sun is present as we go about our daily business, the Moon is out there doing its work while we're tucked up indoors in our cosy homes. If meditation seems altogether daunting, in its simplest form, stepping out to observe the Moon offers a gentler approach to this mindful practice.

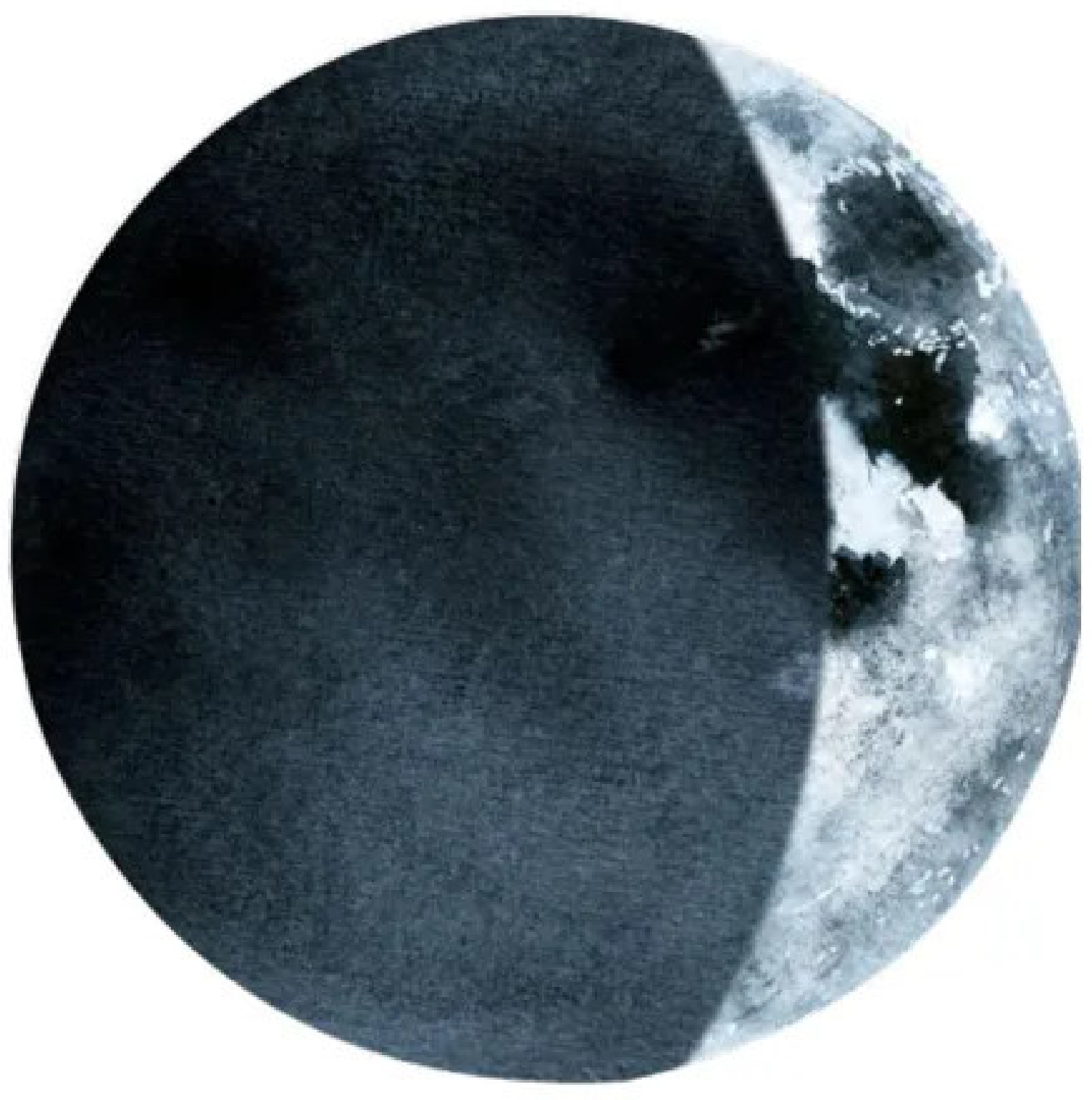
Carving a little time out of your evening routine to press pause and look up is an easy way to start. Take a few deep breaths and stare up at the night sky. Can you see the stars? Breathe in through your nose and fill your lungs. What can you smell? What about your skin – is it cold outside? Can you hear the rustle of leaves or trees nearby? Do you have any shoes on? What can you feel underfoot – or perhaps you are barefoot, grounding yourself into the earth?

Once indoors, creative practices such as journaling, vision boards, playing with cards or self-care, in harmony with the Moon as it ebbs and flows, can really benefit our wellbeing. They offer an inward look at our lives, documenting its goings on and, when reflected on, can provide a pattern or perspective enabling us to move forward. Read on for further pointers, resources and learning.



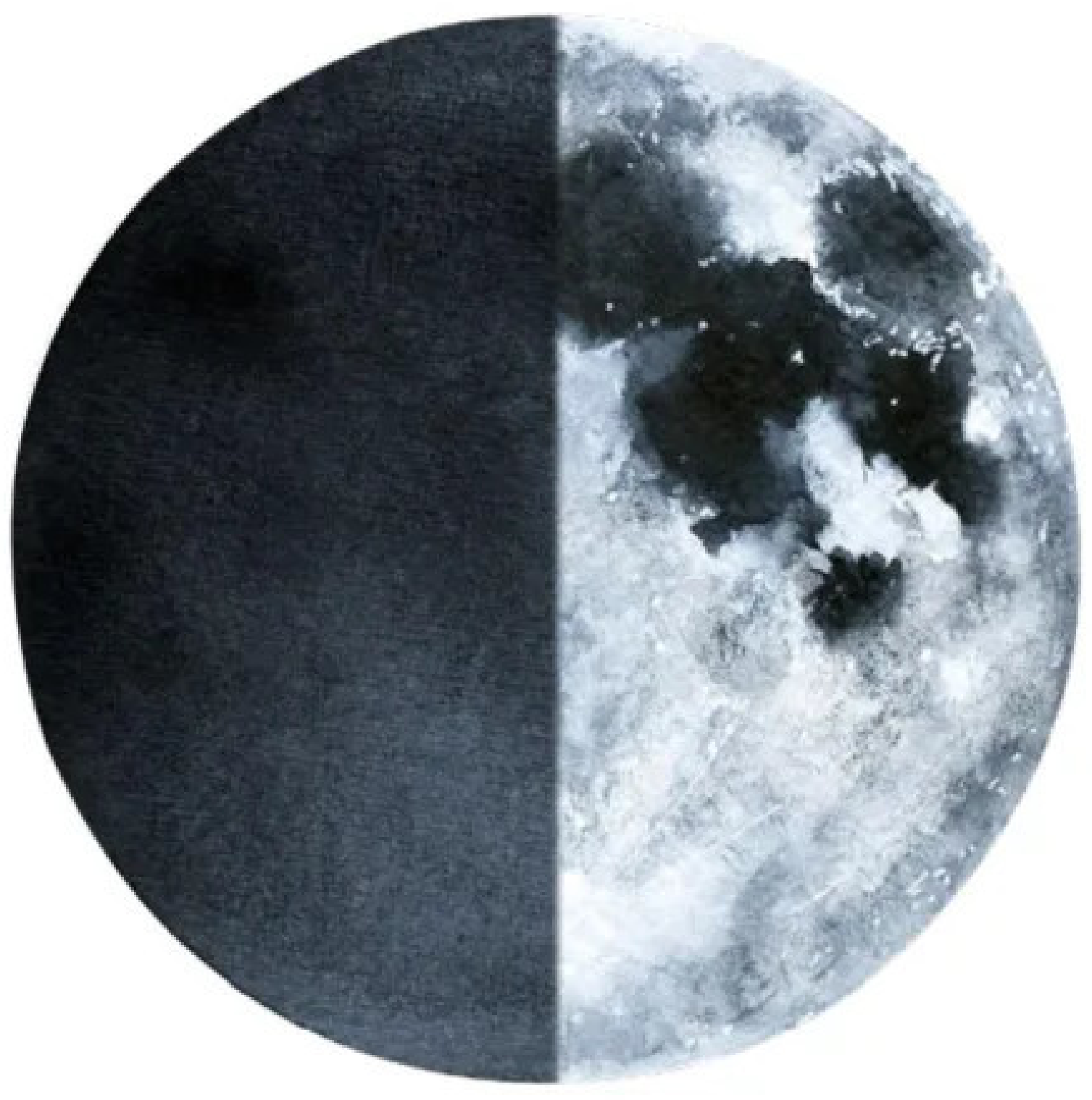
1. New Moon

This is the start of the lunar cycle, when the Moon is dark in the sky. From a spiritual point of view, it's said to be a time to gather yourself and begin again: take time to rest, meditate, journal, plan goals and ideas for the weeks ahead.



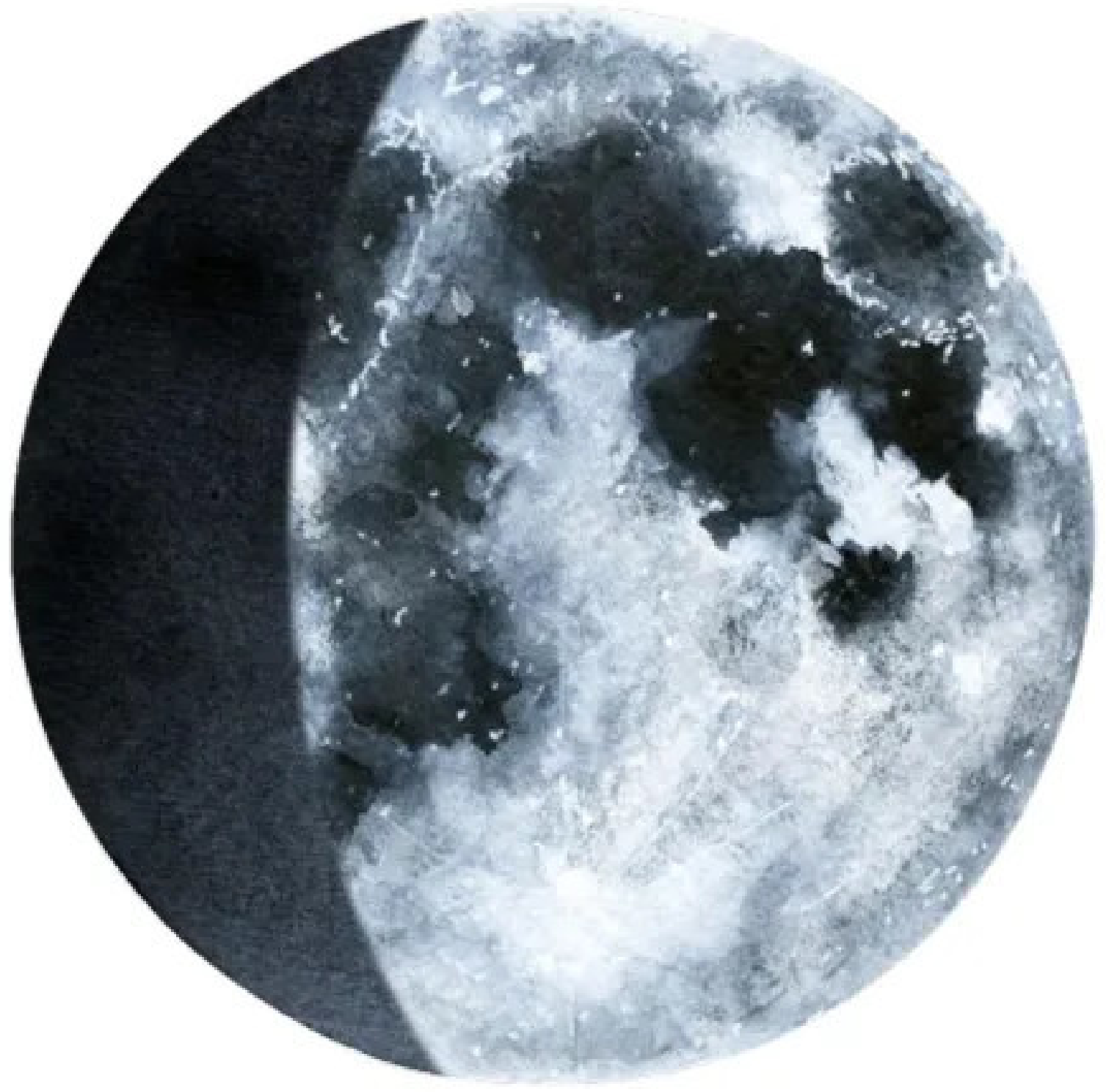
2. Waxing crescent

From the dark into a sliver of light. The waxing element of the Moon essentially means it emerges from the darkness, growing bigger. Now is a good time for making plans and visualising them to help become a reality.



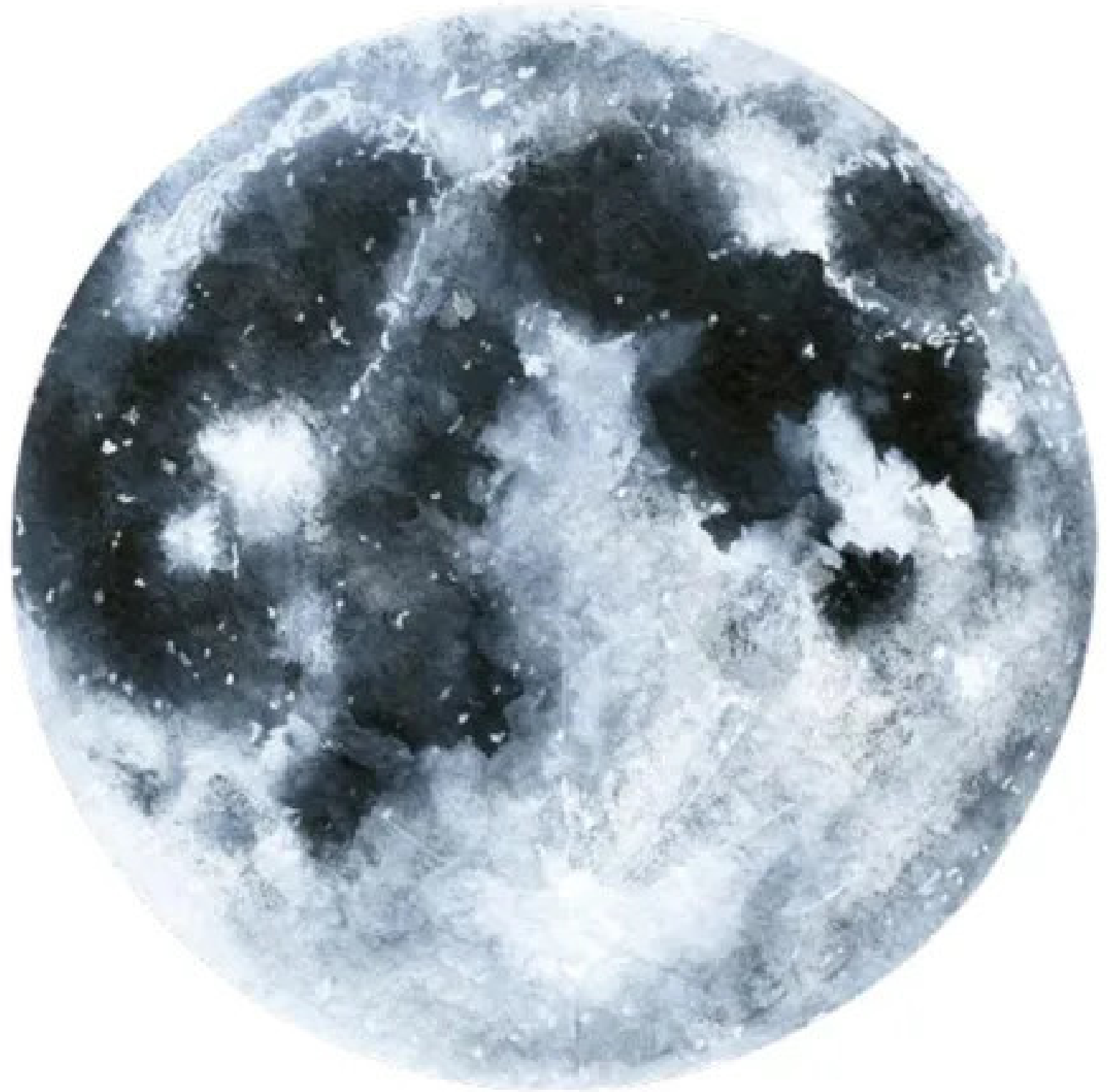
3. Waxing quarter

This is the time to take action. The Moon is growing now, but so are potential obstacles to all of your plans. Work hard, be brave and stay true to your dreams, but also don't be afraid to change your mind if you feel the need to do so.



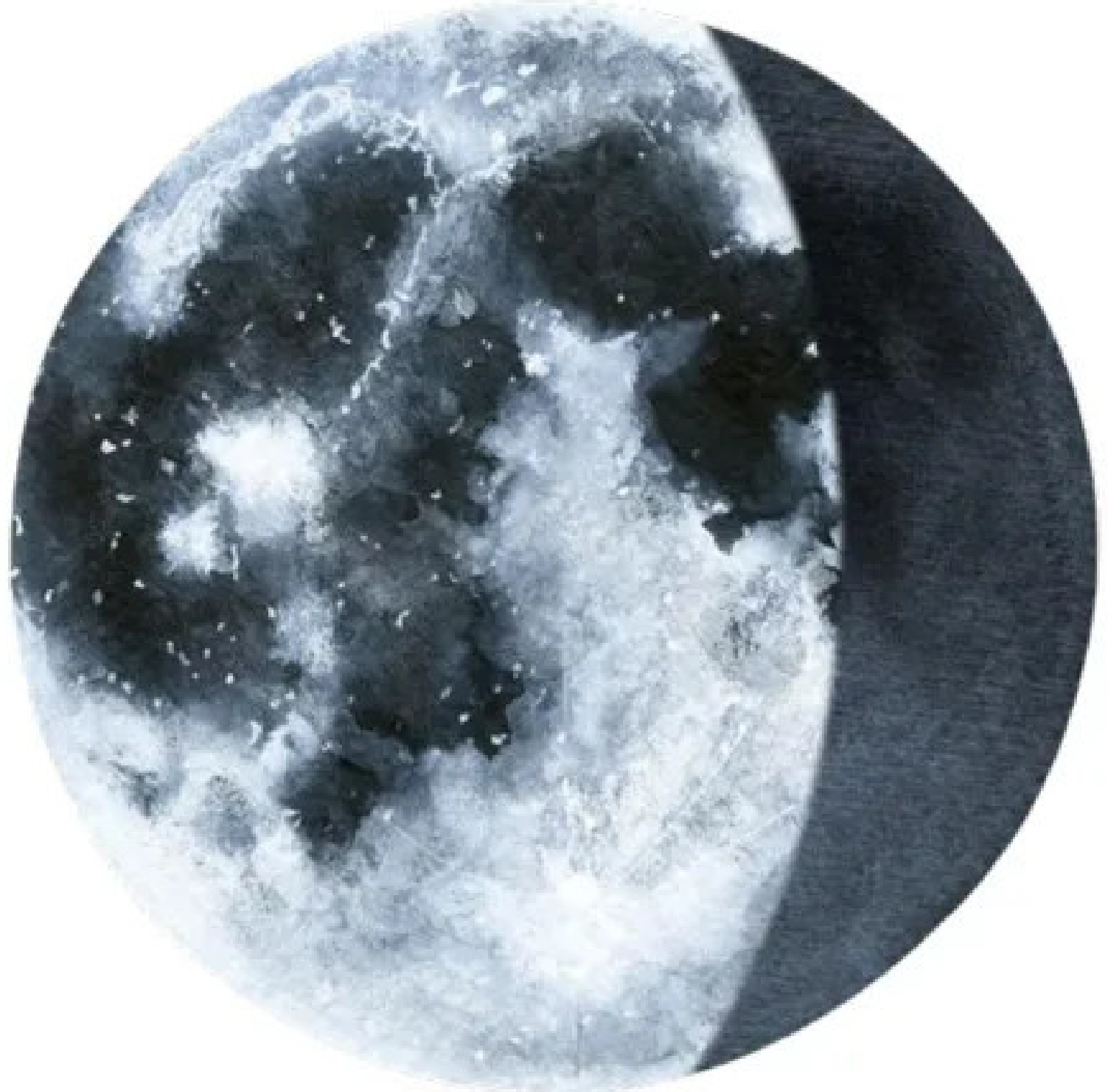
4. Waxing gibbous

More than half full, with just a sliver of darkness – the final quarter – remains. It's a time for meditating and reflecting on the cycle so far – what's worked, what hasn't. Continue documenting your thoughts and feelings in your journal.



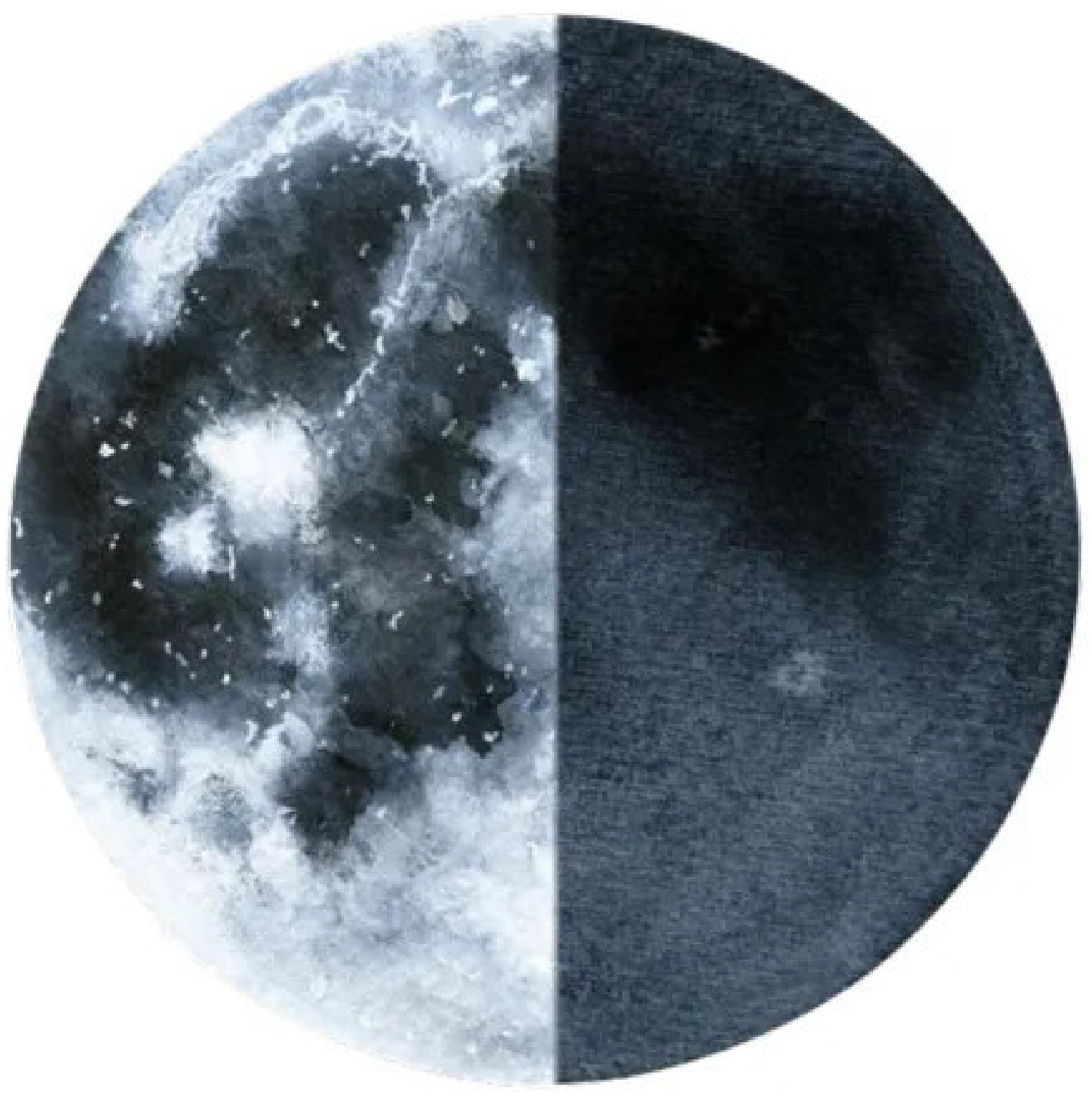
5. Full Moon

The full moon phase is a time for heightened emotions, but it is also an opportunity for peaceful reflection. Sit in the moonlight, observe your surroundings, close your eyes and breathe in through your nose and then out through your mouth.



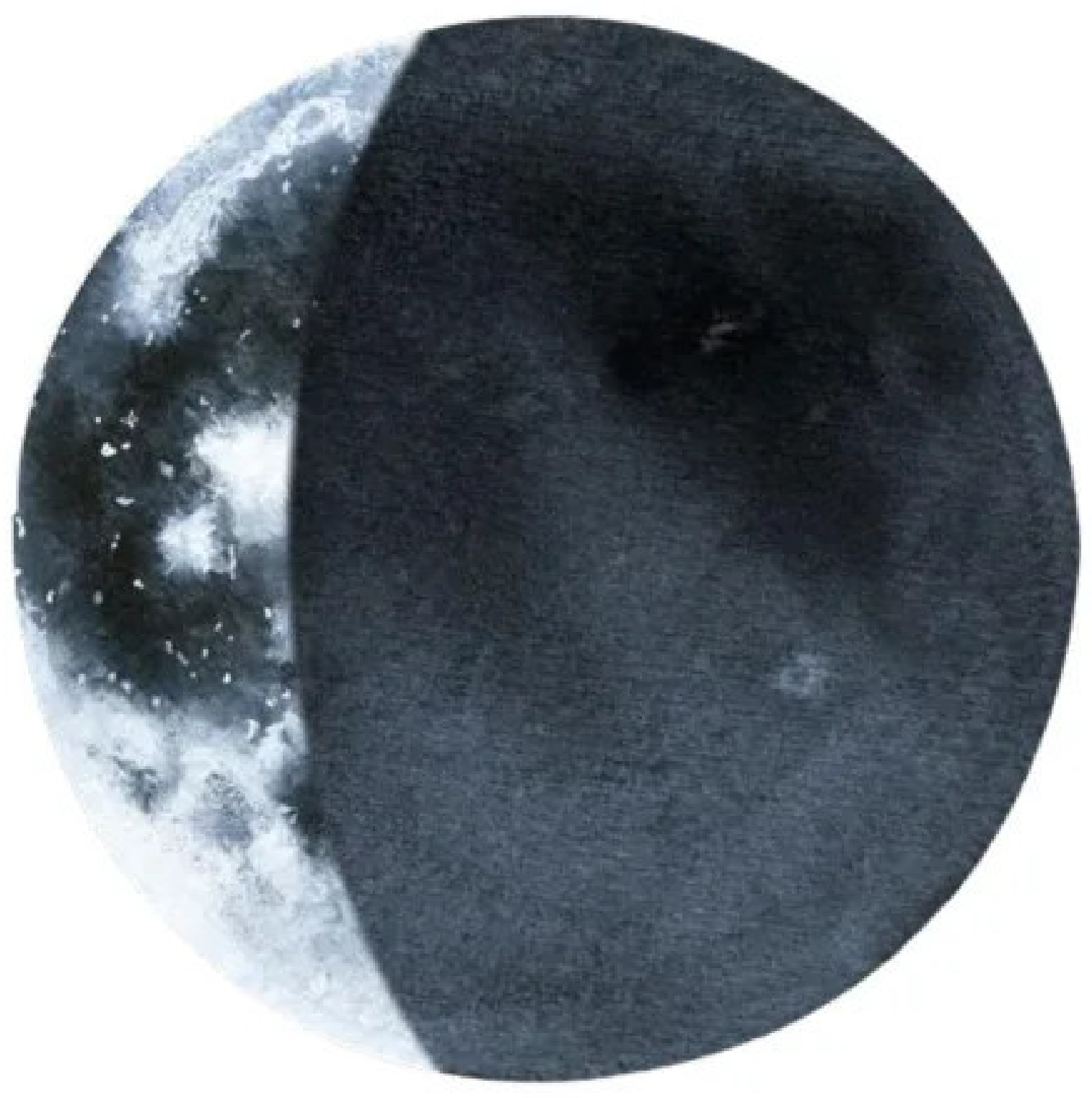
6. Waning gibbous

The Moon is now getting smaller. Key things to keep in mind at this point are reflection, gratitude and focus. Congratulate yourself on what you have achieved, but also create a plan of action for those outstanding items on your to-do list.



7. Waning quarter

The new Moon is on its way. It's a time to review and wrap up current projects and let go of anything that is weighing you down. Breathe, slow down and give yourself the freedom to create space for the new.



8. Waning crescent

Just a tiny sliver of light remains before the new Moon cycle begins. It's a time for resting and self-care. Be kind to yourself. Indulge in a hot bath, some herbal tea, fresh bed covers or your favourite book.

>>>

If journaling and meditation are not really your thing, consider having a go at some creative activities such as painting or collage. Using apps or photographs to draw the Moon in its phase is another peaceful activity to notice its details.

Ultimately, though, whether you believe in the power of Moon manifestations or not, observing the ebbs and flows of nature is a reminder – if it were needed – that we don't always need to keep pushing through tiredness and frustration to get results. Listening to our bodies, being patient with ourselves, taking our foot off the gas and taking time to restore our energy levels to bring a fresh perspective can be just as effective in the long run. As the old saying goes: 'Nothing in nature blooms all year round'.

Blue moons & supermoons defined

If a second full moon appears in a calendar month, it's referred to as a 'blue moon'. A supermoon, meanwhile, is when the Moon appears larger in the sky. According to NASA, it happens when the Moon's orbit is closest to Earth at the same time it is full.

> "Yours is the light by which my spirit's born: – you are my sun, my moon, and all my stars"
>
> **- EE Cummings -**

Lunar learning

Follow its journey

Track the phases of the Moon using the Moon app on your phone. As an experiment, why not try making a note of it in your journal, along with some observances on how it looks in the night sky or how you're feeling? You could even use it to plan and set intentions in line with the cycle. Review and reflect on your findings – do you notice a pattern?

Available on iTunes

Plant by the Moon

There's a view that planting in alignment with the lunar cycles can benefit your garden or allotment. Inspired by Rudolf Steiner's research, Maria Thun dedicated her life to trialling and documenting the sowing, growth and harvest of plants at different times of the year, leading her to create the *Biodynamic Sowing and Planting Calendar*. 57 years on, you can now buy it in both app and book form.

Florisbooks.co.uk

Discover the spiritual side

If you're interested in exploring the connection between the Moon and manifestation, Yasmin Boland's book *Moonology* offers a brilliant insight into this subject. What's more, her website – www.moonology.com – is home to a wealth of resources. With everything from apps to diaries, reports and daily meditation, you'll be in tune with the Moon in no time.

Moonology.com

© Getty Images

Make your house a home

(with plants)

Jennifer Morgan explores the many style points and wellbeing benefits to filling your home with greenery

Our homes are becoming greener and not just from an eco perspective. Have a scroll through your favourite Instagram accounts and you'll see spider plants hanging above baths, cheese plants given quirky names, and carefully curated collections of succulents. But these plants aren't just there for those 'Insta' moments.

"Our lives are becoming faster; we want (and get) instant gratification for the things we do online," says Judith de Graaff of urbanjungleblog-gers.com and co-author of *Urban Jungle: Living & Styling with Plants* (Callwey Verlag, £19.49/$22.25). "But taking care of our houseplants keeps us grounded and slows us down, too. We learn patience because plants don't grow a new flower in seconds, taking weeks or even months to bloom or grow a new leaf."

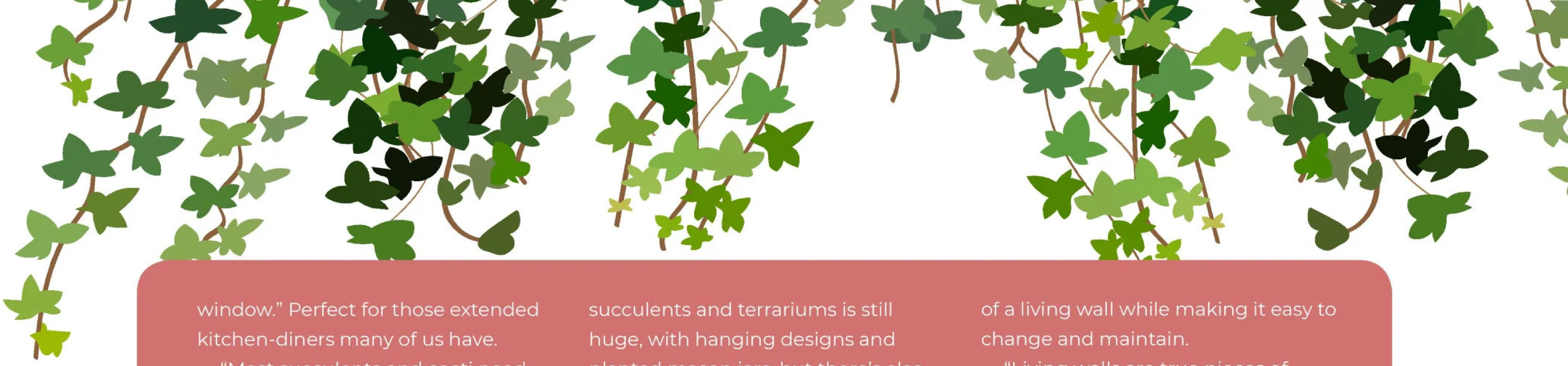
Instagrammer Mimi Jenkins of @plantlovinghome believes there's something about having living greenery within the house: "It just gives you a feel-good factor, especially when not much plant life is surviving outside." Houseplants are a great way of bringing the outdoors in when it's dreary weather – the very opposite of how we strive to take the indoors out during summer months.

"I always think a home looks much more alive and lived-in with plants," agrees Claire Bishop, houseplants buyer at Dobbies. "The craze for houseplants has a lot to do with social media, with stylists and homeowners using them in lifestyle images. But we are also more conscious of the effects plants can have on your environment and mental wellbeing."

THE BENEFITS

"Many indoor plants have air-purifying abilities, helping cleanse the air we breathe from various toxins, releasing fresh oxygen and making our living environment healthier," explains Judith. "With more oxygen we can concentrate, relax and sleep better. Taking care of our houseplants is also relaxing: watering, pruning, feeding and checking up on them from time to time slows us down." When Judith started her global community for plant lovers, Urban Jungle Bloggers, in 2013, houseplants were "hip and happening," she recalls. "Slowly but surely, they have become mainstream. There are very few homes, cafés or restaurants without plants. They're more widely available to buy, too, with lots of new plant shops opening and many interiors brands designing their own ranges of plant pots and botanical products, adding a much-needed touch of nature to any home."

But what about the not-so-green-fingered among us? "It's all about providing the correct conditions for your plant," says Judith. "Light, water, humidity, temperature, soil type and drainage are most important. The majority of common houseplants thrive in bright, indirect light, which means they should be close to a



window." Perfect for those extended kitchen-diners many of us have.

"Most succulents and cacti need direct sunlight and appreciate a sunny windowsill, while the Sansevieria, Dracaena or Pothos can do with shadier areas," adds Judith. "My favourite plants are cacti and palm trees – the bigger the better. Cacti come in so many shapes and colours that they fascinate me, while I love palm trees for their tropical vibe and because it's fun (and simple) to grow them from seed. Plants like Aloe or the peace lily are also very easy and don't require much skill."

"I always feed my plants from March to September," Claire advises, "which is the traditional growing season. This helps with strength of new growth and flower production. I also lift the plant pot out of its planter to water, so the roots aren't left sitting in wet conditions as this can cause them to rot. The most common problem is too much love – overwatering. Many of the on-trend plants at the moment thrive on neglect!" Music to our ears!

Claire is an orchid fan. "I have so many around the house," she says. "Because I've bought them throughout the year, they all flower at different times. The craze for succulents and terrariums is still huge, with hanging designs and planted mason jars, but there's also a revival in retro plants such as the Monstera (cheese plant), Senecio (string of beads or string of pearls), Chlorophytum (spider plant) and Sansevieria (snake plant)."

SHOPPING FOR PLANTS

"There are new plant shops popping up everywhere, but your local garden centre is usually a good place to shop for plants," says Judith. "When you adopt a new plant, make sure you like the look of it and check the label or quickly search its needs online. You're looking for a fresh, healthy and bug-free plant. If in doubt, ask for help to find the perfect plant for your home and lifestyle. If you acquire a large number of plants at the same time, you may feel overwhelmed and it can get complicated taking care of them all, especially if you've never done it before. I always say: 'Let your #plantgang grow naturally'."

But what if you want to go bold and create a living wall, perhaps in an extended kitchen? "It's on my list of things to do one day," says Mimi. Claire has shelving units at home that she layers plants – both upright and trailing species – on, giving the effect of a living wall while making it easy to change and maintain.

"Living walls are true pieces of art and require some in-depth plant knowledge," recommends Judith. "However, you can buy a prefab living wall with an integrated and automated hydroponic system. If you want to keep things simple, buy yourself a Neon Pothos and guide its branches onto your wall with small adhesive hooks. It's beautiful and easy. Or go for several wall planters that you can fill with crawling plants, like Philodendron scandens, Tradescantia, ivy and Boston ferns."

If you're looking for more ideas for displaying your new houseplant collection, Selina Lake, stylist and author of *Botanical Style* (Ryland Peters & Small, £14.19/$19.74), says: "Plant them up in a mix of containers, such as galvanised metal, concrete planters or baskets, then arrange in groups on a windowsill or display trolley. Why not use old wooden crates that can be stacked together to form the perfect place to arrange your houseplants on?"

"To turn your own urban jungle into a success, start small and let it grow with you," Judith says. "Make it personal and meaningful, and love each and every plant you choose."

3 houseplants to try

Peace Lily
(Spathiphyllum)

Removing toxins like formaldehyde, benzene, trichloroethylene, xylene and ammonia in the air, peace lillies are toxic, so keep away from pets and children. Bedrooms or humid bathrooms are ideal. They require little attention and are hardy. Give them a good soaking and let the soil get fairly dry before watering again.

Boston Ferns
(Nephrolepsis)

This is one of the best plants when it comes to removing formaldehyde from the air. It's non-toxic and the feathery ferns look beautiful spilling out of hanging pots. Keep in a cool environment and give it lots of attention. These plants thrive in bright spots but keep the soil moist and directly out of the sun.

Aloe Vera
(Aloe vera)

Known for its health benefits, a lesser-known benefit is how well it removes benzene and formaldehyde from the air. Great for the bedroom as it produces oxygen at night while processing the carbon dioxide in the air, giving you purer air and a chance at a better night's sleep. Water deeply every two to three weeks.

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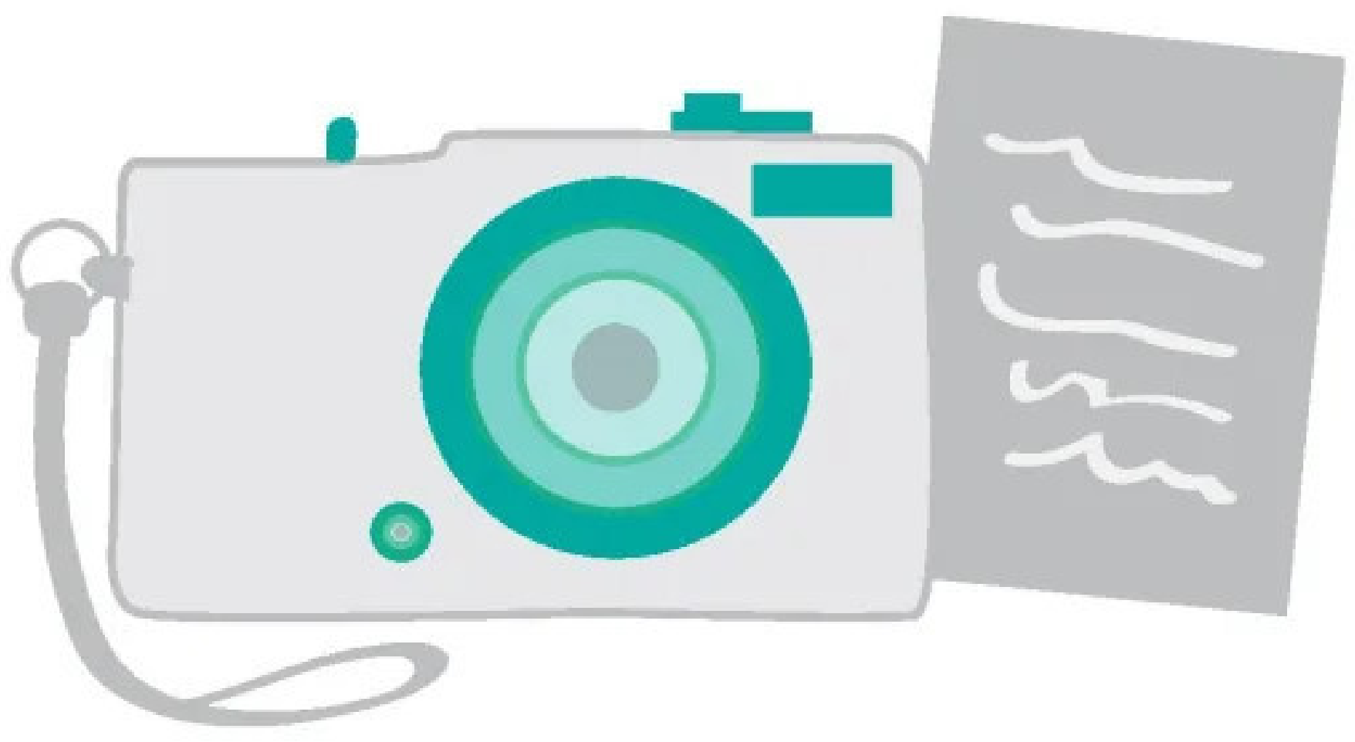
12
essential travel tips

The good, the bad and the ugly backpacking secrets

DOCUMENT EVERYTHING



While travelling and experiencing new cultures and wonders, take plenty of photos, videos and notes. Many have turned travel into a career through blogs, and at the very least, you'll want to have something to share with your family and friends, and look back on.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

It helps to know a little about a place before you visit. What is its history? What are the social taboos? That way, not only will your visit be enriched by cultural context, but, on a more practical level, you won't risk offending anyone.

HAPPY FEET

If travelling by bus, train or plane for longer than a few hours, put on some compression stockings. Even if you can't stand up, be sure to move your legs and feet every once in a while to avoid the risk of cramps or, even worse, deep vein thrombosis.

MAKE FRIENDS

Even if you're travelling in a group, relationships can get strained; sometimes it's important to mix up the dynamic, get some space, and meet new people.

WATER

Always check whether it's safe to drink tap water, or eat salad washed with it. If not, take along water purification tablets or a filtration system.

LEARN THE LINGO

HOLA!
HELLO! CIAO!

Make the most of your travel experience by learning some key words and phrases in the local language. Even the basics can make all the difference.

TAKE TIME OUT

If you have the means, don't be afraid to slow down and chill out every once in a while. Though you obviously want to keep up momentum, you definitely don't want to burn out. There's no shame in splashing out a little bit more on a hotel room every now and then for a little down time.

PLAN YOUR PERIOD

You'd be surprised at how difficult it can be to buy certain sanitary products abroad. Buy a stash before you travel and keep them safe in your luggage. In some countries, disposing of tampons, or even tissues, can be problematic, so consider using a reusable menstrual cup for an eco-friendly alternative.

LEARN TO SQUAT

Toilets can be one of the most challenging aspects of travelling. In many parts of the world, people are required to squat to do their business. When you find yourself faced with filthy train toilets or just holes in the ground, you'll want to be prepared – so get squatting.

SLEEPING ROUGH

When sleeping on a train, or a less-than-hygienic hostel, use your own sleep sheet and pillow for peace of mind – and freedom from bed bugs.

TAKE SOME TEA

Tea and coffee can be notoriously hard to find in some regions. When you do come across teabags and 3-in-1 coffee sachets, stock up.

PRESCRIPTIONS

Ensure any prescription medication is legal in all countries you plan to visit. You could end up in trouble if it's on a list of controlled substances.

© Getty Images; Illustrations by Laurie Newman

Why you should try foraging

Sarah Gane will help you to discover the amazing flavours of the wild for free

If you're eager to try living more in harmony with the seasons, you can't get any closer than foraging in the local woodland and hedgerows for food. Searching out your sustenance from the plants, herbs and trees in the wild for free is something people – our ancestors – have been doing since the beginning.

While it does take some knowledge and skill (and permission from the land owner), don't be daunted: we don't have to look too far to find useful and delicious plants. The beauty of this ancient practice is that they're often found right under our noses once we stop to take a look.

COMMON SPECIES

Plants near you will vary depending on the landscape, the weather and where you are located, but the good news is that it's never been easier to start. Step outside and look around you. Whether it's your garden or a local woodland, one of the first plants you're likely to encounter are dandelions. Take care to pick them in areas free from dog walking, petrol fumes or pesticides, but once collected and washed, the young leaves can be used in salads. The roots can also be dried and turned into dandelion root coffee.

Nettles, meanwhile, are very tasty at the start of the year, and said to be a great source of iron – pick the new tips and fry them up with some garlic, onions and mushrooms, and stir into fresh pasta. You could even make a tea from them.

Another lovely leaf that will pop up in early spring is wild garlic. The fragrance really packs a punch, and can enhance many a dish, from quiches to scones, soups to sauces. Check out our recipe for a delicious wild garlic pesto on page 96.

BERRIES, SYRUPS, JAMS AND JELLIES

On the sweeter side of the spectrum, if you happen upon some wild strawberries while you're out and about, you're in for a treat. These little gems may be tiny, but have an amazing, intense strawberry flavour to them. You'll normally find them tucked beneath a mass of green leaves with delicate white flowers in all kinds of places, such as mature gardens, woodland and heathland.

The pretty white petals of elderflower are said to be in bloom at the start of summer, which is around May time in the UK. If you're lucky enough to gather a bunch or two, you could try making cordial from them – add the syrup to a cake or cocktails for a tasty seasonal treat.

Foraging in the hedgerows can uncover a treasure trove of delights, depending on the time of year: blackberries, rosehips, hawthorn berries, sloes – each one as versatile as the next. Combine blackberries and apples for jams (see recipe on page 99), crumbles or pies. Sloes can become homemade gin; hawthorn berries make a lovely jelly; and rosehips work well as a syrup.

But before you tackle any of these, you really need to be sure about what you're picking, so why not use this an opportunity to attend a workshop locally to gain some helpful knowledge? Once armed with a little know-how, you can feel more confident with your gathering and really make foraging a regular practice throughout the year.

LEARN FROM THE EXPERTS

When it comes to practitioners, there are a few to choose from based around the country and online. Dee Dade at Hedgerow Herbs (**hedgerowherbs.co.uk**) runs courses at different points throughout the year from various locations, including the wonderful River Cottage (**rivercottage.net**). In these sessions you'll learn more about identifying plants, when, where and how you can use them, as well many a delicious recipe.

Fore Adventure (**foreadventure.co.uk**), based on the UK's south coast, also provides a range of foraging sessions and workshops to try for beginners. It runs casual, short walks, half-day workshops or 'forage and feast' events, where you gain a wealth of knowledge and settle down

Wild garlic pesto

Whip this tasty pesto up in no time

100g / 3.5oz
Wild garlic

50g / 2oz
Parmesan (swap for nutritional yeast if you're vegan/vegetarian)

50g / 2oz
Skinned and toasted hazelnuts (or pine nuts)

A little lemon juice

Salt and pepper for seasoning

Wild garlic, or 'ramps' as they're known in the US, provides a beautifully fragrant start to spring. In fact, you'll find it hard to miss these when they're in season and you're wandering the woods – the smell is both delicious and powerful! Here is a quick and easy pesto recipe, but in truth you can use wild garlic for anything, including pasta, soups, risotto, salad dressings, omelettes and more. Let's get started.

1: Wash your wild garlic leaves and pat dry with some kitchen towel. Put them in your food processor and blend.

2: Add your hazelnuts (or pine nuts, if you're using them) and parmesan (or nutritional yeast), and blend a little longer to form a paste.

3: Finally, add a little olive oil – the quantity will vary depending on how thick or thin you want your pesto. Season with salt, pepper and a little lemon juice. Transfer to a jar or airtight container and use within a week.

Use a food processor if you have one. A pestle and mortar will work fine; just be prepared for it to take a little longer!

If you don't like hazelnuts or can't eat them, swap them out for 50g of toasted pine nuts instead.

Add your oil gradually so you can check the consistency as you go to get the perfect pesto.

to a three-course meal at the end of the day. Taste the Wild (**tastethewild.co.uk**), meanwhile, runs a range of workshops in its private woodland and various locations around the north of England.

If you're US-based, the Chestnut School of Herbal Medicine (**chestnutherbs.com**) offers a brilliant syllabus of online learning material, including an Online Foraging Course. For those who would like to learn about foraging in person, Wild Food Adventures (**wildfoodadventures.com**) is an Oregon-based organisation that runs 22 workshops and events each year, and most are family friendly too.

GO IT ALONE

If you'd prefer to head out by yourself or with friends, you'll need a few tools for the job. Equipment needn't be complicated, but it pays to be prepared. Take a wicker basket, a bottle of water and some bags – handmade cotton ones from fabric scraps, paper bags and recycled plastic bags are all brilliant for carrying a multitude of gathered goods, whether it be grubby roots or delicate foliage. Tubs or recycled fruit punnets can help keep soft fruits from getting squished too.

It's really important you can fully identify what you're foraging, so a guidebook and hand lens are invaluable. When it comes to snipping and picking, a pocket knife, trowel and pair of secateurs are necessary to ensure you keep damage to an absolute minimum. And whatever you pick, keep the 'foraging guidelines' over on page 98 in mind throughout.

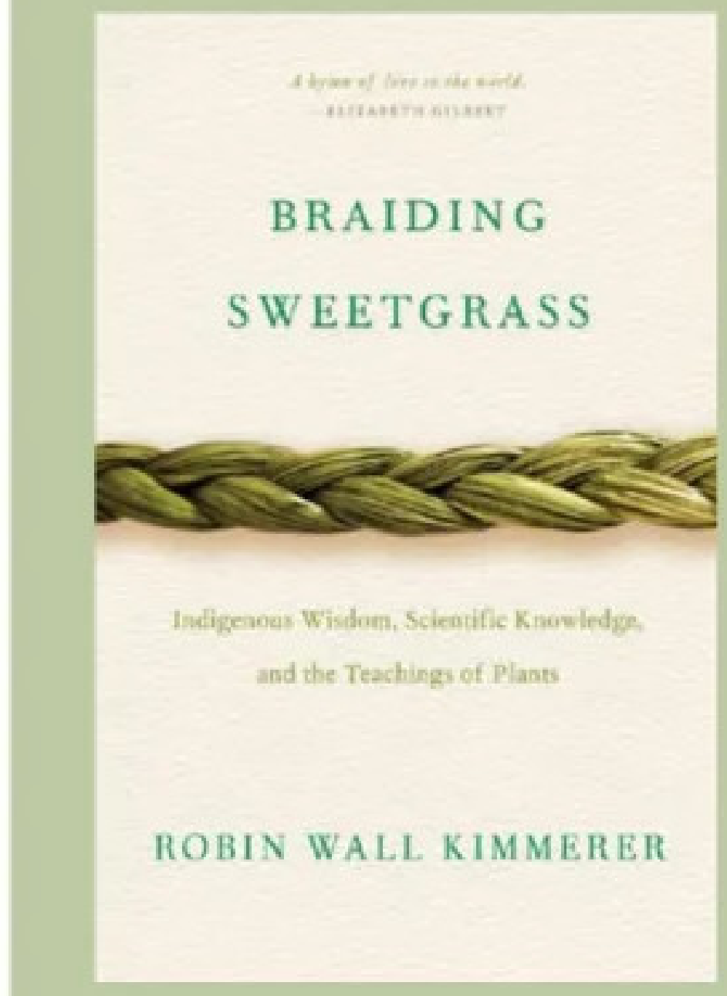
> It's important you can identify what you're foraging, so a guidebook is invaluable

Continue your learning

Helpful resources to deepen your foraging knowledge

Read

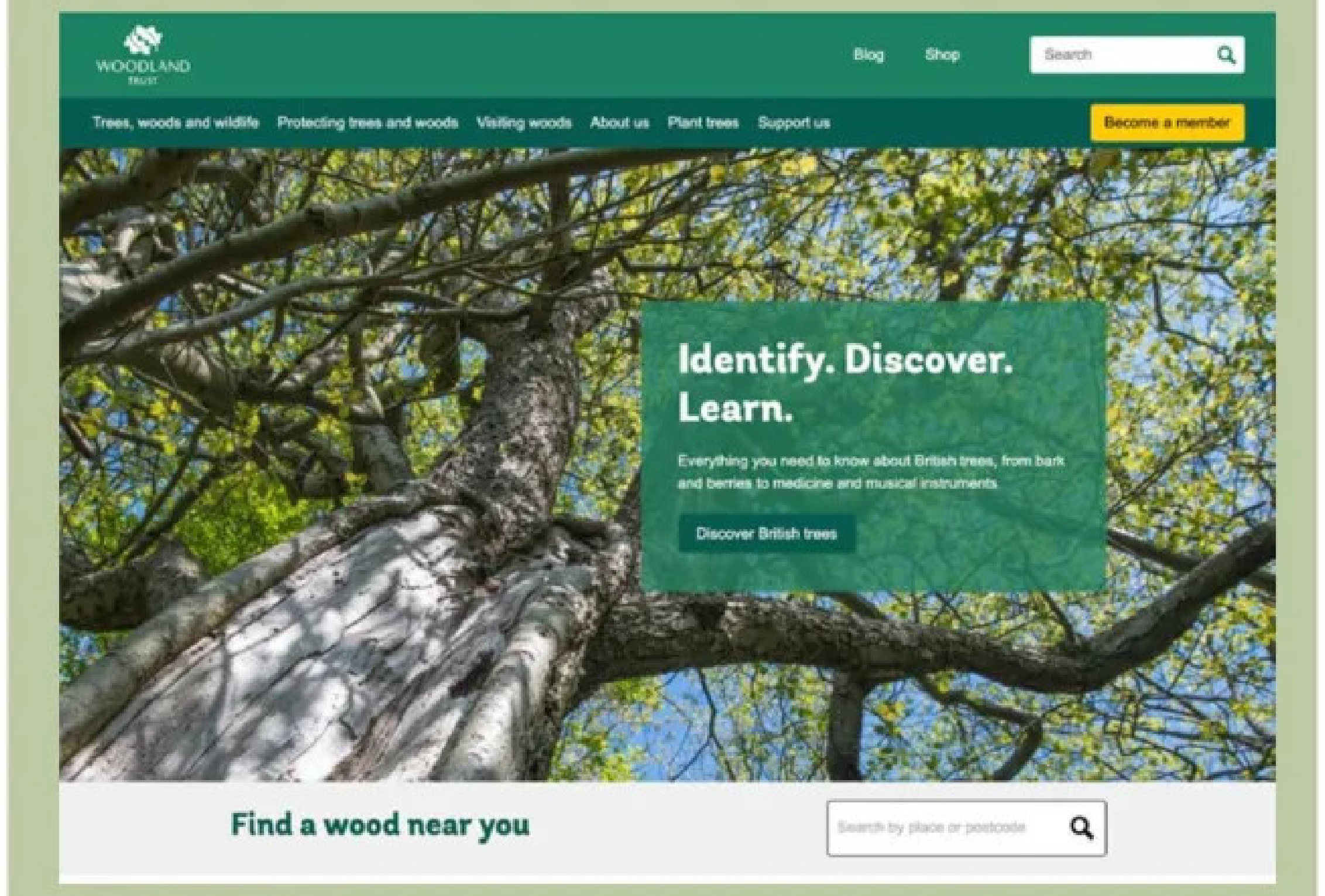
Braiding Sweetgrass
by Robin Wall Kimmerer


A hymn of life in the world
ELIZABETH GILBERT
BRAIDING
SWEETGRASS
Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants
ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

This beautiful book by Dr Kimmerer brings together her years of experience as a botanist with indigenous wisdom. An enjoyable read, this book offers a fresh perspective on the world around us. As soon as you finish this, you'll long to start right at the beginning again.

Browse

Woodland Trust
This organisation provides a great guide to what plants to expect each month, along with recipes, rules and other handy tips and tricks.
woodlandtrust.org.uk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Trees, woods and wildlife
Protecting trees and woods
Visiting woods
About us
Plant trees
Support us
Become a member
Discover British trees
Search by place or postcode

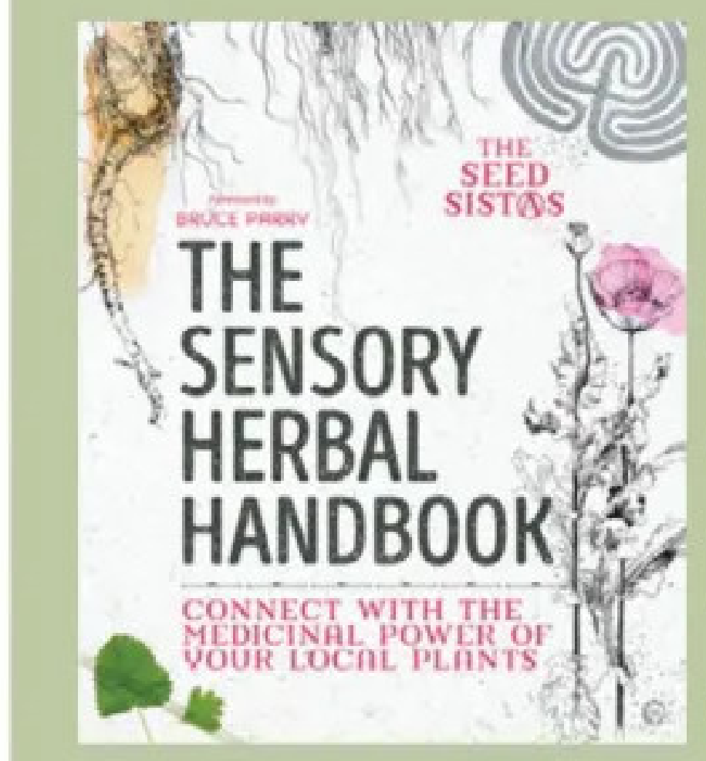
Identify. Discover. Learn.

Everything you need to know about British trees, from bark and berries to medicine and musical instruments

Find a wood near you

Read

The Sensory Herbal Handbook
by The Seed Sistas


THE SEED SISTAS
Foreword by BRUCE PARRY
THE SENSORY HERBAL HANDBOOK
CONNECT WITH THE MEDICINAL POWER OF YOUR LOCAL PLANTS

Curious to learn more about herbs and your local landscape? Check out this brilliant new book by Fiona Heckles and Karen Lawton. You'll find wisdom, medicines, recipes and rituals within these pages.

Carve out a peaceful moment to gather your supplies to reconnect with your surroundings

FORAGING AS A FORM OF MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION

While freshly foraged food benefits our bodies (especially when we know exactly where things have come from), even the act of searching food out in this way can also boost our mental health.

Carving out a peaceful moment to gather your supplies can help you reconnect with your surroundings. Take time to really immerse yourself in the task at hand. Perhaps you could take the chance to switch your phone off – carefully inspect the leaves and the fruit, and take in your surroundings instead.

Inhale deeply and exhale for a little longer than your in-breath. What can you smell? What can you hear around you? How do the crunching twigs, leaves or springy grass feel underfoot? How do the leaves and fruit feel on your fingertips? Paying attention to these little details help you learn from the environment, informing you what to pick, what to leave and what might be ready waiting for your next visit.

Beyond what we physically gather from our foraging excursions, living in harmony with nature's cycles encourages acceptance for things outside of our control. Treasuring the fleeting smells and tastes of a season means expressing gratitude for nature's gifts and an appreciation of things that have taken energy and time to grow. It also provides a connection with the land itself, rooting and fully grounding you in the present moment.

Foraging guidelines

Things to keep in mind while you're out and about

1. Get permission from the person who owns the land.

2. If you're not confident about what you're picking, ask someone who is. Never eat anything until you're sure you know what it is.

3. Only take what you need; not the first plant or the last. It's important you leave some for the wildlife, as well as fellow foragers.

4. Take gently. Don't trample, damage or destroy plants unnecessarily.

5. Don't pick plants from areas of heavy traffic, dog walking or near crops that may have been sprayed with pesticides.

Hedgerow jam

Blackberries and apples work their magic in this tasty spread

250g / 9oz
Blackberries

250g / 9oz
Apples
(we used two good-sized ones)

500g / 1lb 1oz
Sugar
(caster sugar works well)

2
Cooking apples,
grated (with skin on)

1.5tbsp
Lemon juice, plus
grated rind of half

Foraging among the hedgerows in summer is so much fun. The best blackberries are very often surrounded by tons of brambles and prickles, so pick with care! Feel free to swap them out for another fruit, if you'd prefer – just make sure the weight is the same. You need your total fruit to match that of the sugar.

1: Grate your apples, including the skin, and put them into a large pan with a little water and your lemon juice until they cook and soften.

2: Add your berries and mix together, then cook for a few minutes on a medium heat. Next add your sugar, turn up the heat and boil until it reaches its setting point.

3: Remove the pan from the heat, pop a lid on and let it cool for 10 minutes. Pour into a sterilised jar and seal.

DETERMINING THE SETTING POINT

Keep a plate in the freezer before you start, then pop a blob of jam on the plate every few minutes, allow to cool and press your finger into it to test the consistency.

Cooking the apples normally takes around 10 minutes on a medium heat.

If it's your first time, finding the setting point may take a couple of attempts.

Eat with porridge, toast or freshly made scones for a tasty treat.

© Getty Images

© Getty Images

Creativity

"You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have"

– MAYA ANGELOU–

Art journaling

When it comes to art journaling, there are no rules. Sarah Gane takes a look at how this freestyle craft can positively impact your mood and creativity

Many of us can relate to there never seeming to be enough time in the day. Whether you're feeling the pressure from work, home, family or just day-to-day life, we all need a release from the expectations of others – and ourselves.

Enter art journaling. Essentially a mixed-media sketchbook or notebook, this form of freestyle crafting encourages you to experiment with whatever materials you have and make something unique. "Art journals are the place to go for creative play, for documenting our lives and emotions," says Get Messy co-founder and creative director Caylee Grey (**www.getmessyart.com**). "[It's] a low-pressure way to try out all those creative techniques we see floating around the internet and in our heads. If there's art and it's in a journal, it's an art journal."

This creative form of expression isn't new: think back to childhood – most of us were probably given stacks of art supplies to amuse ourselves with, yet as adults we don't often award ourselves the same type of freedom. Sasha Zinevych (**www.instagram.com/sasha_zeen**) tells us more: "For me, art journaling is a form to express myself, let my inner creative child out doing what she loves. In fact, I have always been creative as a kid: I adored dancing, attended a theatre circle for seven years, loved drawing, playing with paint and Play-Doh. Then, how it often happens, I stopped doing these things because this wasn't something 'big girls' did. However, I have always felt this emptiness inside that my creativity could fill. Can you relate to that? I tried drawing here and there throughout the years, but nothing stuck. I felt like I wasn't producing any good results and it took the fun out of the process."

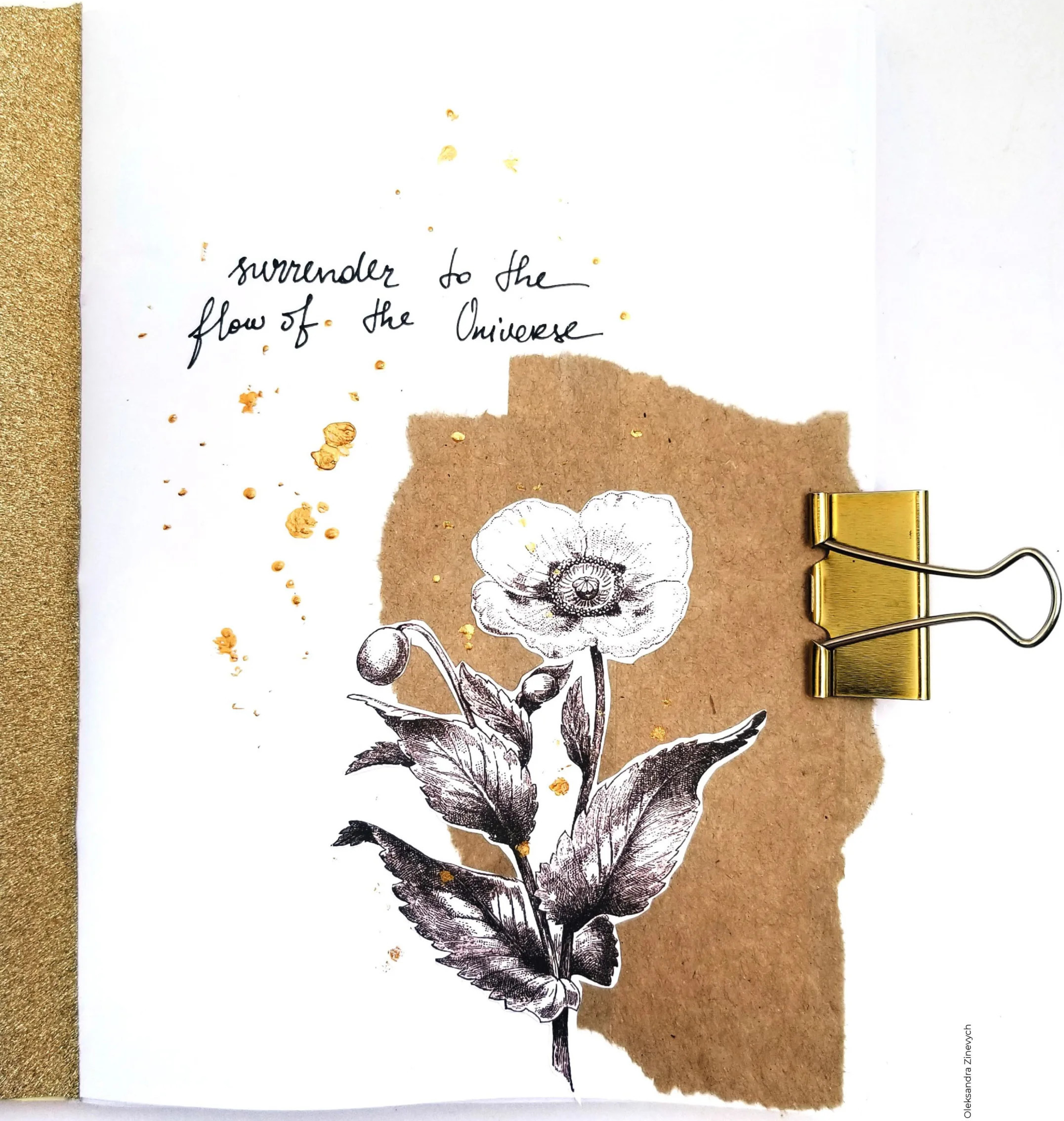
The discovery of art journaling three years ago through the Get Messy community made her realise what she'd been missing: "The freedom, the fun of just playing with your supplies and not worrying about being skilled enough. You can plop some paint on the page, write a few words and call it done, if that's what and how you want to express yourself. There is also no limit to what supplies and media you can use – anything goes! So, this art practice is extremely freeing."

WHERE TO BEGIN

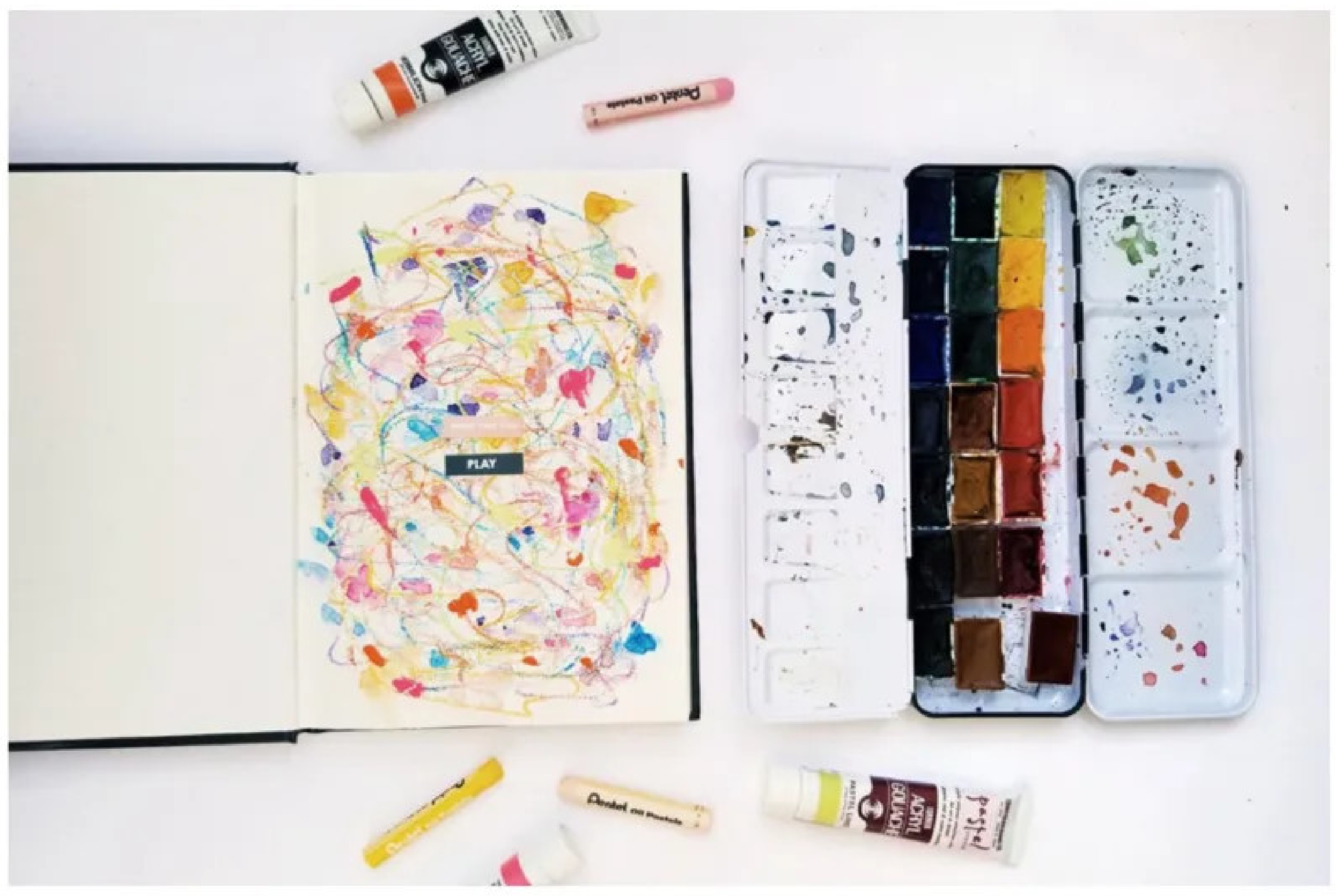
In terms of getting started, one of the best things about this creative practice is that you don't need to go out and buy pricey art supplies. The beauty is in its simplicity. "It [can be] so tempting to go and get the best of everything just to play around and see what you like most," admits Sasha. But remember that you are still able to produce astounding work without buying the latest stamp sets

Look for pockets of time

"Most people feel like art is something that is all-consuming, that you have to be a crazy-haired wanderer living in an attic with canvases all around you covered in messy acrylic paint. The truth is that artists are people who create time in the lives they *already have*. They prioritise the making. Artists open their journals while the toddler is napping and get to work. They use the two minutes while the microwave goes to add some paint to the page. They carry their journal and a few pens to the doctor's office. The real truth is that *nobody* 'has time for art'. Every person who makes art creates that time and says no to other things."
– Caylee


surrender to the
flow of the Universe

© Oleksandra Zinevych



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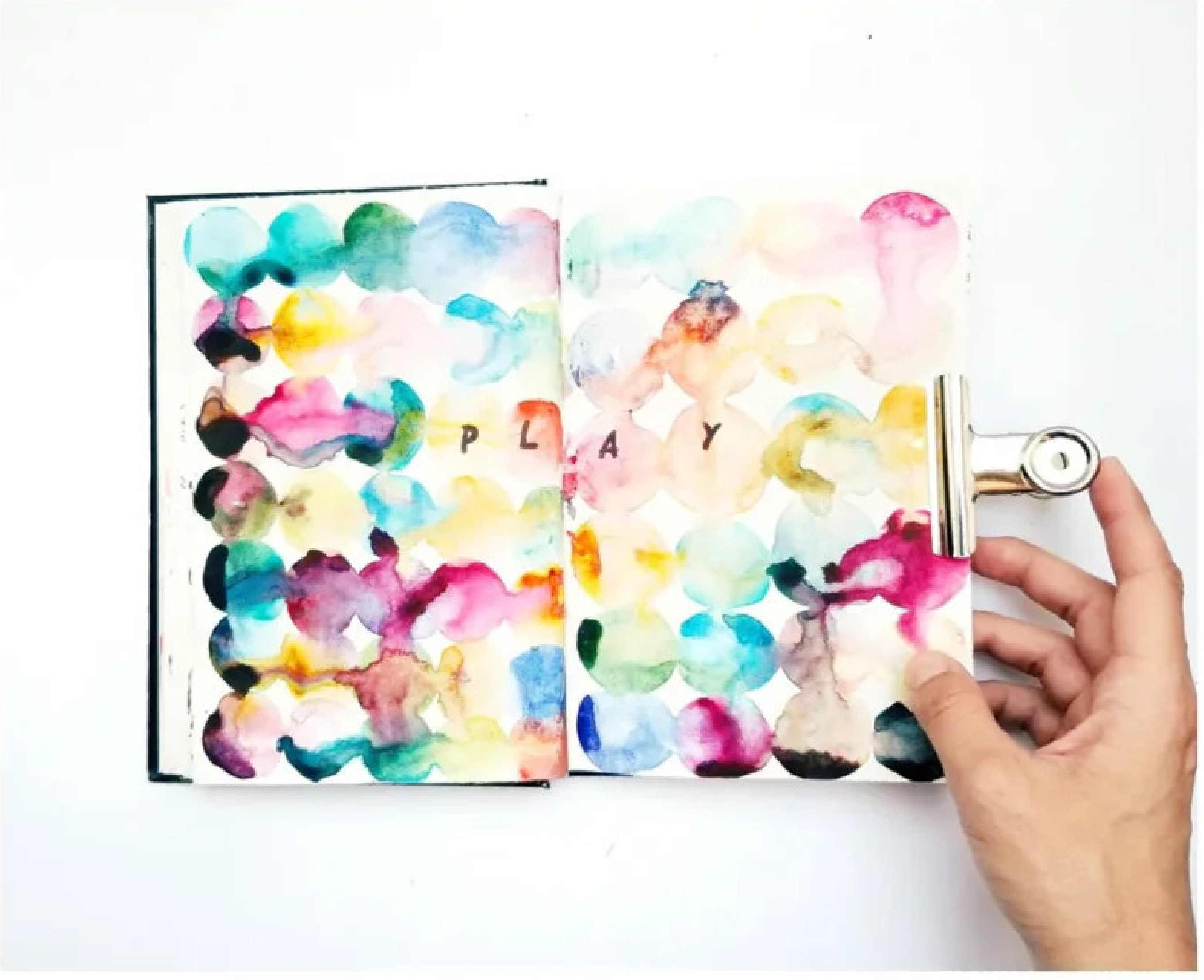

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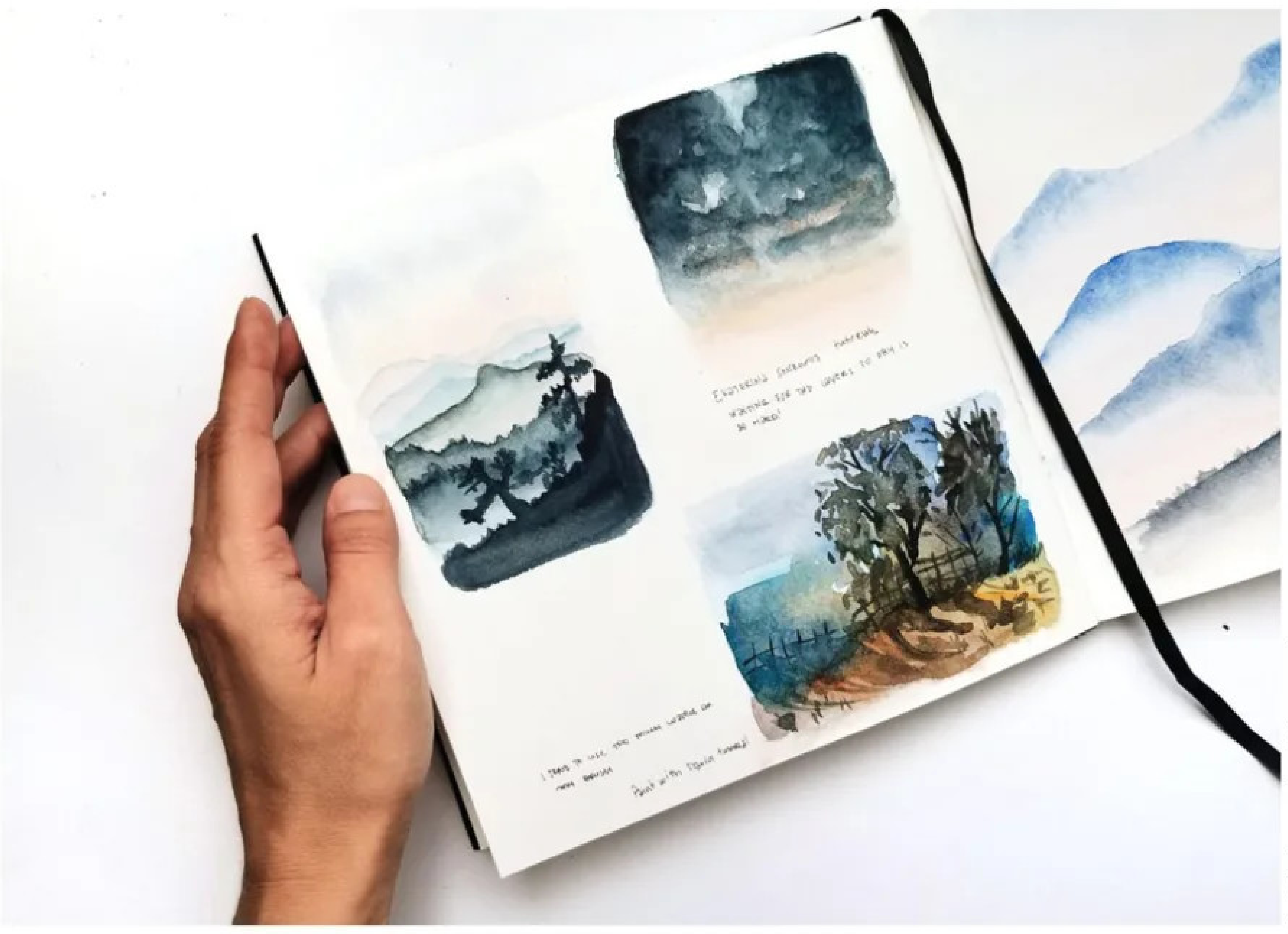

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or paints. "Some of the most amazing artists I know create their incredible art with cheap Dollar Store watercolours, use copybooks as their journals, write their beautifully scripted quotes with a simple ballpoint pen, and go through free store catalogues and newspapers to find collage elements. You don't need a budget to start art journaling – your creative mind is enough!"

Having said that, if you are a stationery fan already (and, let's be honest, who isn't?), you can utilise whatever mediums you like to work in. Everything from paper scraps and old magazines to stamps, gouache, watercolours, pastels and gel pens can be put to work to create something beautiful. "Even if you only have two of those things on the list, it's great! You can produce an interesting and consistent body of work with it!" Sasha encourages.

All that's left for you to do is face the fear of a blank page, but even then don't forget that you're still in charge. "If the first page seems scary – skip it. You can go back and fill it once you feel more confident in your art," Sasha says. "If you have no idea what you should do with your journal, prompts can be a great place to start. There are many free art journaling prompts online, or whole communities (like Get Messy Art Journal) that give you weekly prompts to inspire your creativity."

THE POWER OF PENS AND PAINT

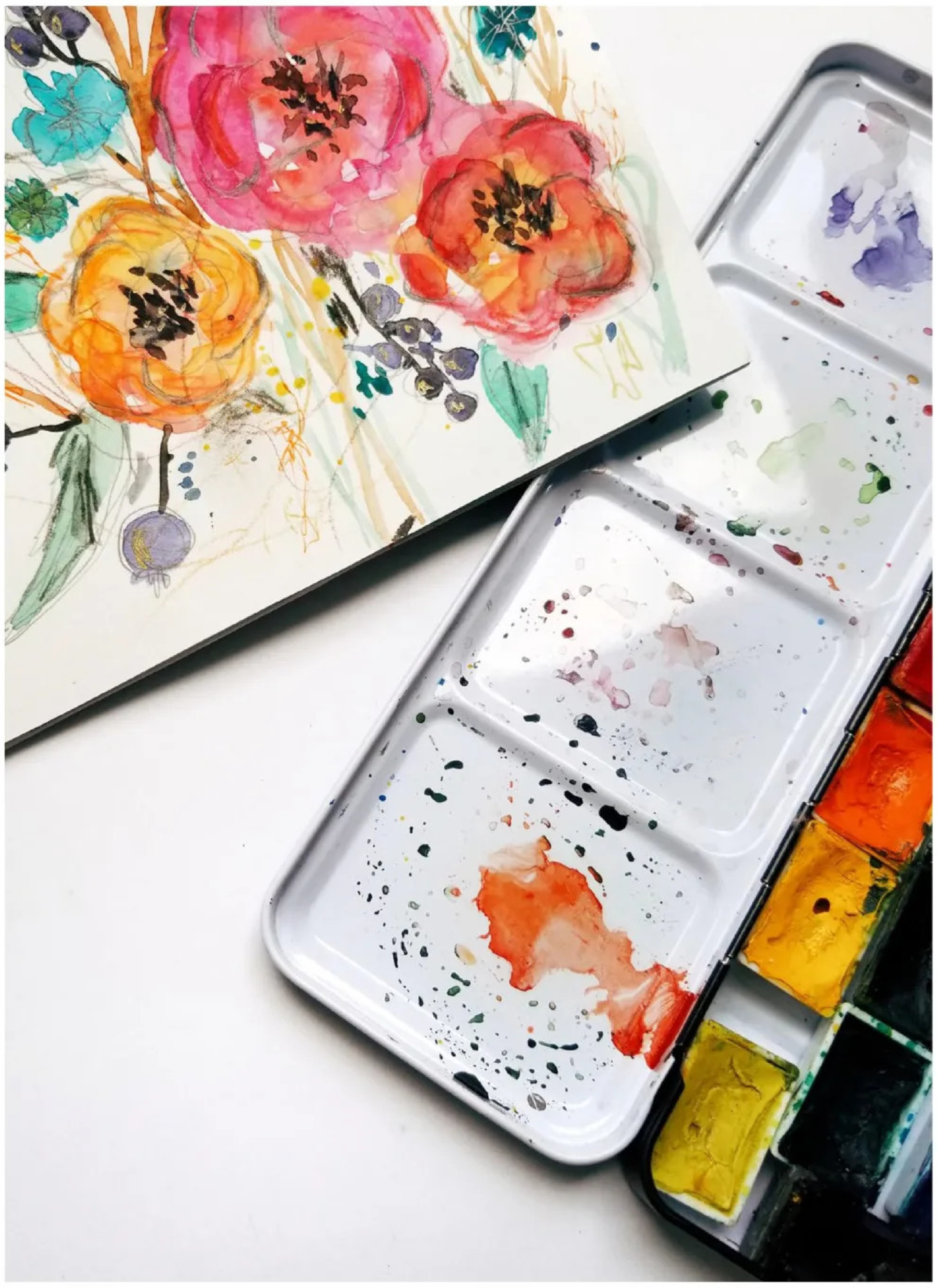
The benefits of this are threefold: you carve out a bit of time for yourself to have fun; pressing 'pause' on day-to-day life enables you to immerse yourself in the activity as a form of mindfulness; and the very act of journaling can help you process thoughts and feelings you might be experiencing.

Get Messy's Caylee Grey explains more: "Art journaling can be very therapeutic if you allow it. Your private journal is a place to take all the fogginess inside your brain and put it onto the page. Some days that will include words, some days it will just be abstract paint. The more you art journal, the better your process becomes for working through issues… your art journal will carry your thoughts so that you don't have to."

"All art has healing powers and art therapy is a real thing," adds Sasha. "Art journaling is a perfect way of working out your anxiety, fear, sadness, grief, lack of confidence – whatever bothers you. Moreover, it can also be a form of therapy where you have an inner dialogue with yourself, pouring your questions, doubts, gratitude, happiness into a page. If you need to let the steam out, you can destroy the journal spread, cover it in black paint, burn it, make holes in it. You can also use art journaling practice as meditation, slowly spreading the paint around, not thinking about what the result will look like."

The 'hidden journaling' concept can also help process emotions or simply enable you to write something personal without judgement. "If you feel like you need to vent, write whatever you need to say on an art journal page, and then cover it with collage, paint, scribbles and doodles," Sasha advises. "No one needs to know what went down under the layers of art, but there is something therapeutic in pouring your heart onto paper and painting over it."

© Caylee Grey



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Keep in mind

There are no rules

“The first thing you need to remember is: art journaling is whatever you [want] it to be. I know people who draw and paint in their art journals, I know people who collage, others mostly write or leave their pages mostly white. Make it yours.”

– Sasha

Start where you are

“Use a journal that you already have and buy some gesso. Not investing too much money into a journal will really take the pressure of ruining it off you. If you are not familiar with gesso, it basically works as a primer for your page, making it thicker and able to take more layers of paint. However, if you feel like you are more into collage and writing, don’t even bother with it, just start creating.”

– Sasha

Create little and often

“[There’s] a really great introduction to art journaling for free on the Get Messy site (www.getmessyart.com). It removes all barriers and makes it so easy that you can’t say no. If you do something small every day for just one month (or two weeks, or even one!), you’re going to make magic. It’s inevitable. Put something on your page – your favourite paint, pictures or words... you’re going to mess up, you’re going to make a mess, it’s going to be glorious if you keep at it.”

– Caylee

Don’t be afraid

“The best-kept art journaling secret? Anyone can do it!”

– Caylee

Painting by letters

Laurie Newman talks to calligraphy superstar Blink Lettering and finds out how you too can unlock your creativity and come out feeling de-stressed

With the rise of the tablet, smartphone and computers, we have developed a constant involvement with technology in our daily lives. However, more and more people are turning to craft, colouring and drawing to escape this digital world and get back to basics. Calligraphy is one of the many hands-on crafts that enable you to access the creative side of your brain, which can help to alleviate stress caused from daily life and work. According to experts, creating art can tap into the mind's state of 'flow' – a state of mind that enables you to switch off to a near–meditative state. Laurie Newman has been chatting to Instagram sensation Milly Withers from Blink Lettering about how she's adjusted the way she views her own work over the years, why it's helped her mental health, and what top tips she has for new calligraphers. You will even get to practise calligraphy yourself with Blink Lettering's exclusive page of strokes (see page 108).

© All images: Blink Lettering

Q Tell us a bit about Blink Lettering: how long have you been a calligrapher and what pulled you towards it?

A Hi! I'm Milly, the founder of Blink Lettering. By day I am a graphic designer, which I absolutely love, however it means I spend a lot of time working on a computer. I missed the hands-on approach of school and even university. About four years ago I stumbled across the calligraphy community on Instagram and spent hours obsessively watching videos. From there I bought my first brush pen and fell in love! I set up my Blink Lettering Instagram about six months after this, for a place to share my work, and to encourage me to create something every day. In the past three years it's grown into my business, where I sell prints, create content for brands and teach workshops – all while still working full-time as a graphic designer.

Q Do you think calligraphy helps you unwind after a long day at work? If so, do you think it helps with your mental health and your stress?

A If I have no pressure of a commission or creating an Instagram post and just having a play, then 100 per cent yes it helps me unwind, and gets me away from screens too. I feel like I can zone out and forget the stresses of that day. However, there can be a stressful side to it, like when I have something in my head I want to create and it's just not working out right. My attitude towards this has changed a lot recently. I used to stress out about not posting regularly and constantly compared what I created to other calligraphers I followed online. As I've grown and developed as a calligrapher, I've become more confident in my own work, and this in turn has reduced a lot of the stress I used to feel. Now I just embrace mistakes and imperfections. I have spoken about this a lot on my Instagram lately, showing people that my calligraphy doesn't always work out the first time. My followers have really appreciated seeing this honest side of my work, and I think being more open has helped my mental health massively. I also love that I'm inspiring people every day!

Q What piece of advice can you give to people new to calligraphy?

A Get the right tools! It doesn't need to cost you lots either. The two things I really recommend are a Pentel Fude Touch Sign Pen (make sure it's the one with the flexible nib) and a Rhodia Dot Pad. Basic strokes are also a great starting point to get used to the tools. They don't look like much at first, but when they're combined you'll start forming letters. Finally, don't compare yourself to others; remember it's a fun, creative outlet and if you keep practising every day, you'll see some amazing progress.

Get in touch

- blinklettering
- blinklettering
- **W** www.blinklettering.co.uk
- **E** blinklettering.etsy.com

beautiful minds inspire others
colour

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
girl boss

Blink lettering offers anything from hand lettered cards to bespoke prints

Basic strokes

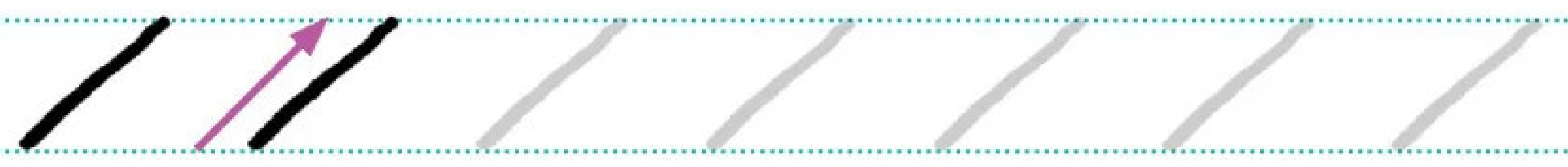
The basic strokes below are the starting point to creating beautiful calligraphy. These give you a good understanding of how to create each letter, and are a great way to warm up before doing any type of calligraphy.

The guides below are designed to be used with a small brush pen, like the Pentel Fude Touch Sign Pen. Lay a sheet of tracing paper over the top, so you can practise over and over again. Follow the direction of the arrows, and remember thin lines go up and thick lines go down.

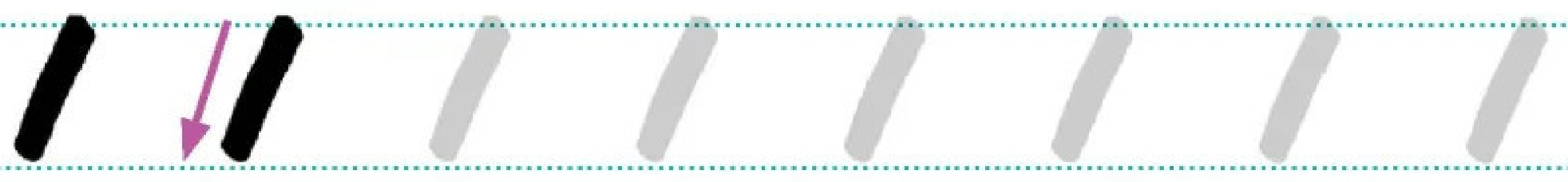
blink
LETTERING

If you'd love to learn how to turn these strokes into letters, head over to **www.blinklettering.co.uk** to find out about workshops and online resources.

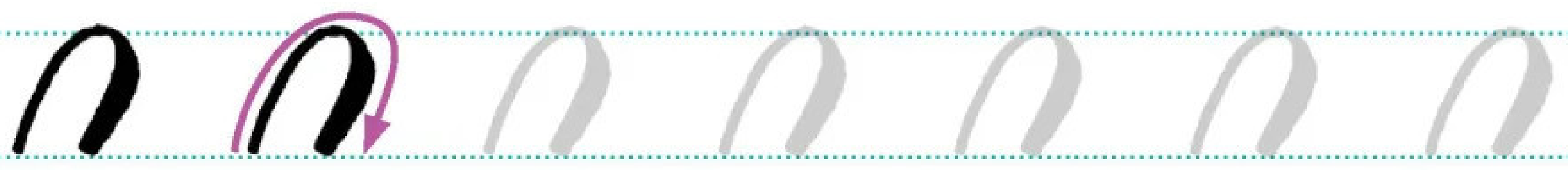
ENTRANCE/EXIT STROKE



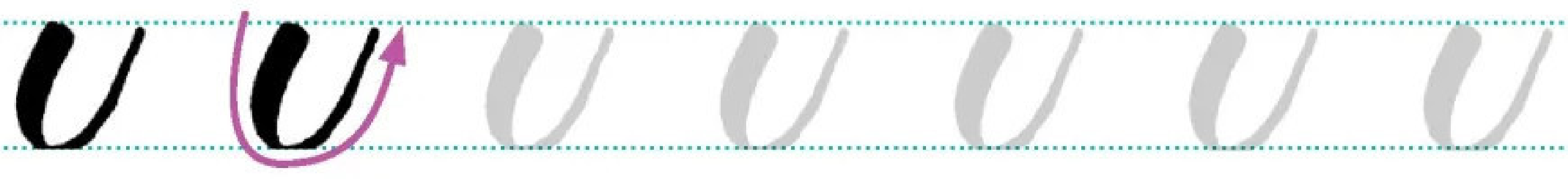
FULL PRESSURE STROKE



OVERTURN



UNDERTURN



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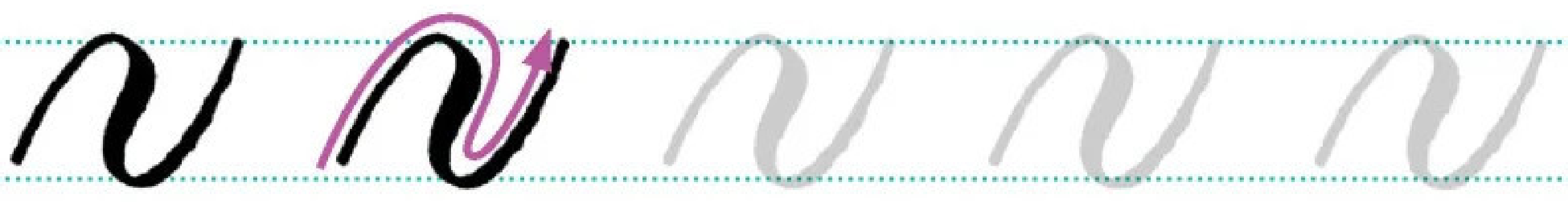

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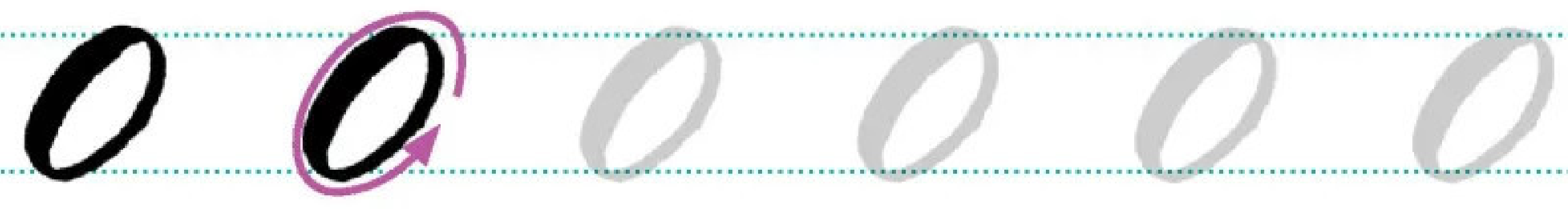
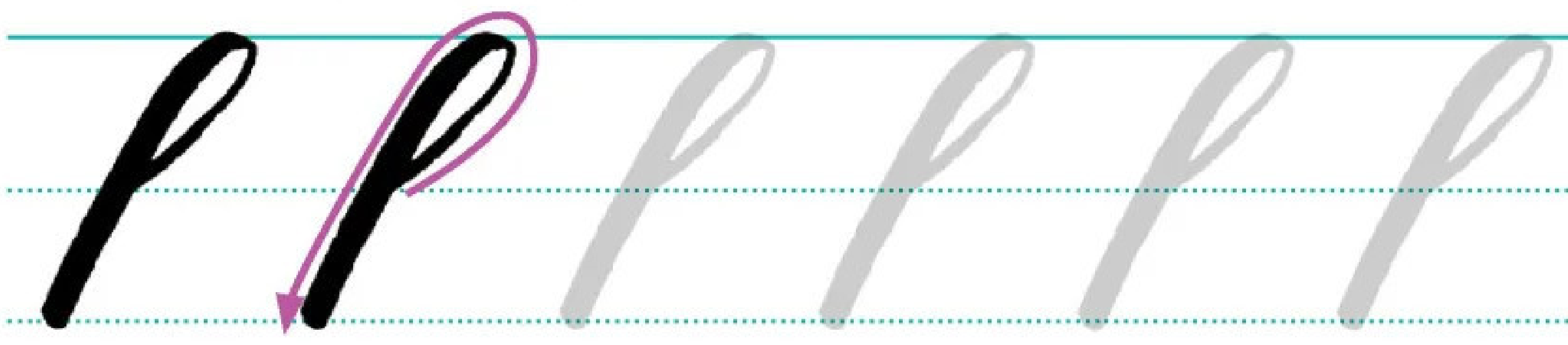
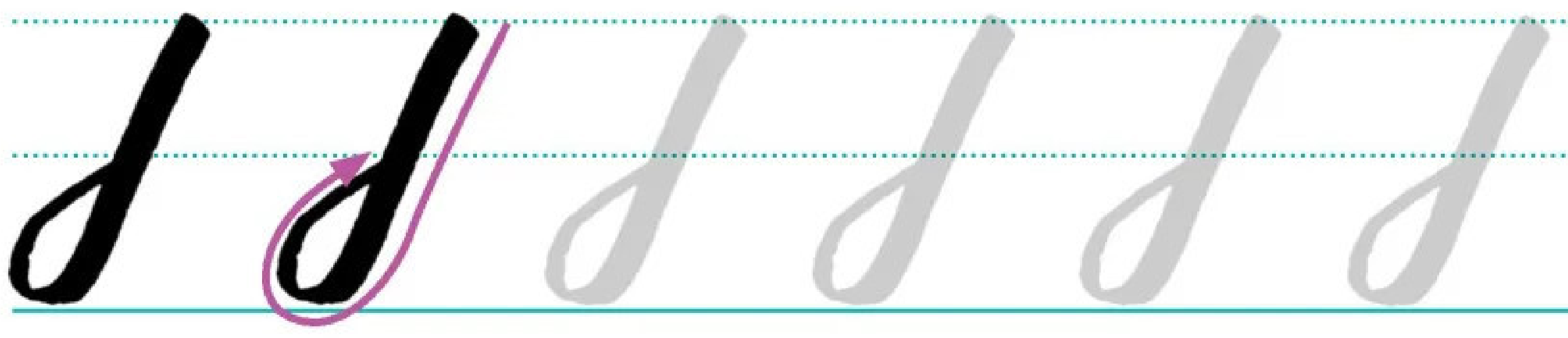


ASCENDING STEM LOOP



DESCENDING STEM LOOP



Learn the
RULES like a pro
so you can
BREAK them like
an ARTIST
PABLO PICASSO

Meet the makers

A career in the creative industry is undeniably hard work, but Sarah Bankes speaks to three artists about the benefits of doing what you love

Lucy Tidbury

Known for her Moo Selfie series, Dorset-based artist Lucy Tidbury works primarily with oil paint on canvas, and enjoys combining her love of animals – particularly cows – with her love of the beautiful countryside. Lucy tells us how leaving a career in the corporate world to become a full-time artist was the best decision she ever made.

What was life like before you became a full-time artist, and what made you decide to change your career path?
I graduated university in 2007 and spent time doing various odd jobs, went away travelling for a year and then finally settled into a career with a national insurance company in 2010. In this time, I always did my painting alongside work, but it was difficult to find the time and create a balance. The job was good, it was a great company to work for, and I had a salary, holidays, pension and so on, but I always had this niggling feeling that it just wasn't what I wanted to be doing. My painting was taking a bit of a back seat while my career was growing, and this made me feel quite uncomfortable. Ironically, my career was in wellbeing, the focus being on mental health as well as physical health. I realised in 2014 that it was time to make a decision: I either pursue the career in the corporate world or take the leap and become a full-time artist. Trying to juggle the two was playing havoc with my own wellbeing! So after a huge amount of encouragement from friends, family and colleagues, I handed in my notice. At the time, I had little responsibility with only my rent and bills to pay; no children, no mortgage and not quite 30 years old at the time – if I didn't do it then, I never would! So in October 2014, I worked my very last day in the corporate world and haven't looked back since.

My career as an artist has grown and grown in the last five years. I never expected it to grow quite so fast! It's amazing what you can achieve when you throw yourself into it. I've gone from a self-employed artist working at the kitchen table to owning a Ltd company with a team of four, 15+ stockists, my own gallery and ecommerce site, and even my very own branded Moo Mobil!

Where do you tend to do your painting?
I do the majority of my painting in my studio/gallery in Swanage, which I've had for two years now. Before that, I used to do all my painting at home. It was great to work from home, but I did find it very difficult to ever switch off, and my work-life balance became quite unbalanced! Having the gallery is perfect, as I can go to work, do my painting, then leave the paints behind and head home. Although I love painting and see it as a hobby as well as a job, I definitely need to create some barriers or I would be painting 24/7, which is not ideal!

You manage to capture the landscapes and animals you paint so perfectly. Where do you get your inspiration from, and how do you create such captivating scenes and expressions?
I love to visit the places I'm going to paint, to get a feel for the landscape and the atmosphere. I also love to meet the curious residents – this really helps when capturing their character! I tend to mostly work from photographs that I have taken, but occasionally, if time allows and the weather is good, I sit outside with my spaniel, Ned, sketching the landscape. I can then use the sketches and photographs to work from in my studio to create the finished painting.

In terms of inspiration, I've become quite the country girl over the last five years or so, and love nothing more than being outside with Ned. We spend many hours walking and running around our beautiful countryside, and this is where I get the majority of my inspiration. The landscapes we see and their residents feature in a lot of my work.

Get in touch

LucyTidburyArt
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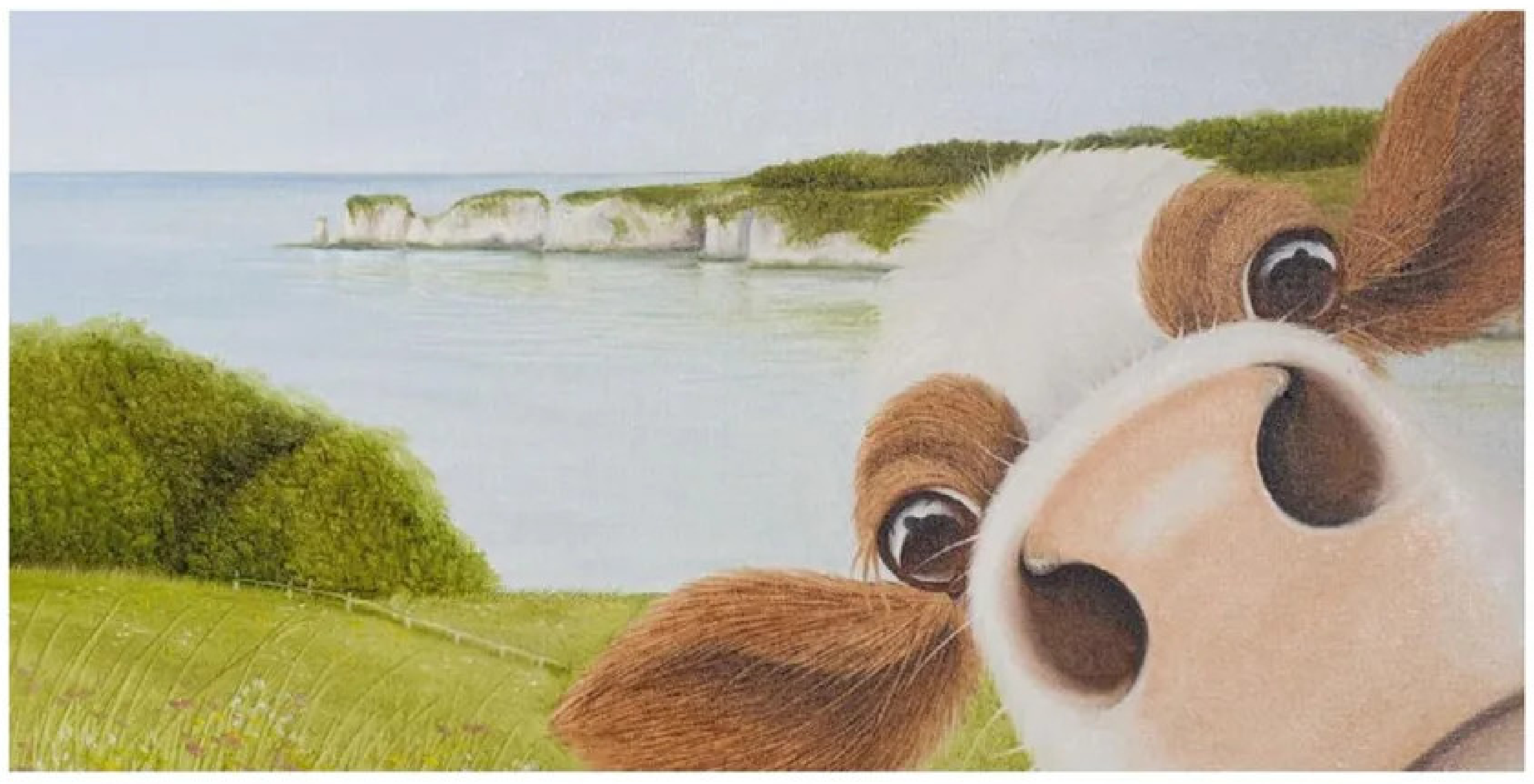
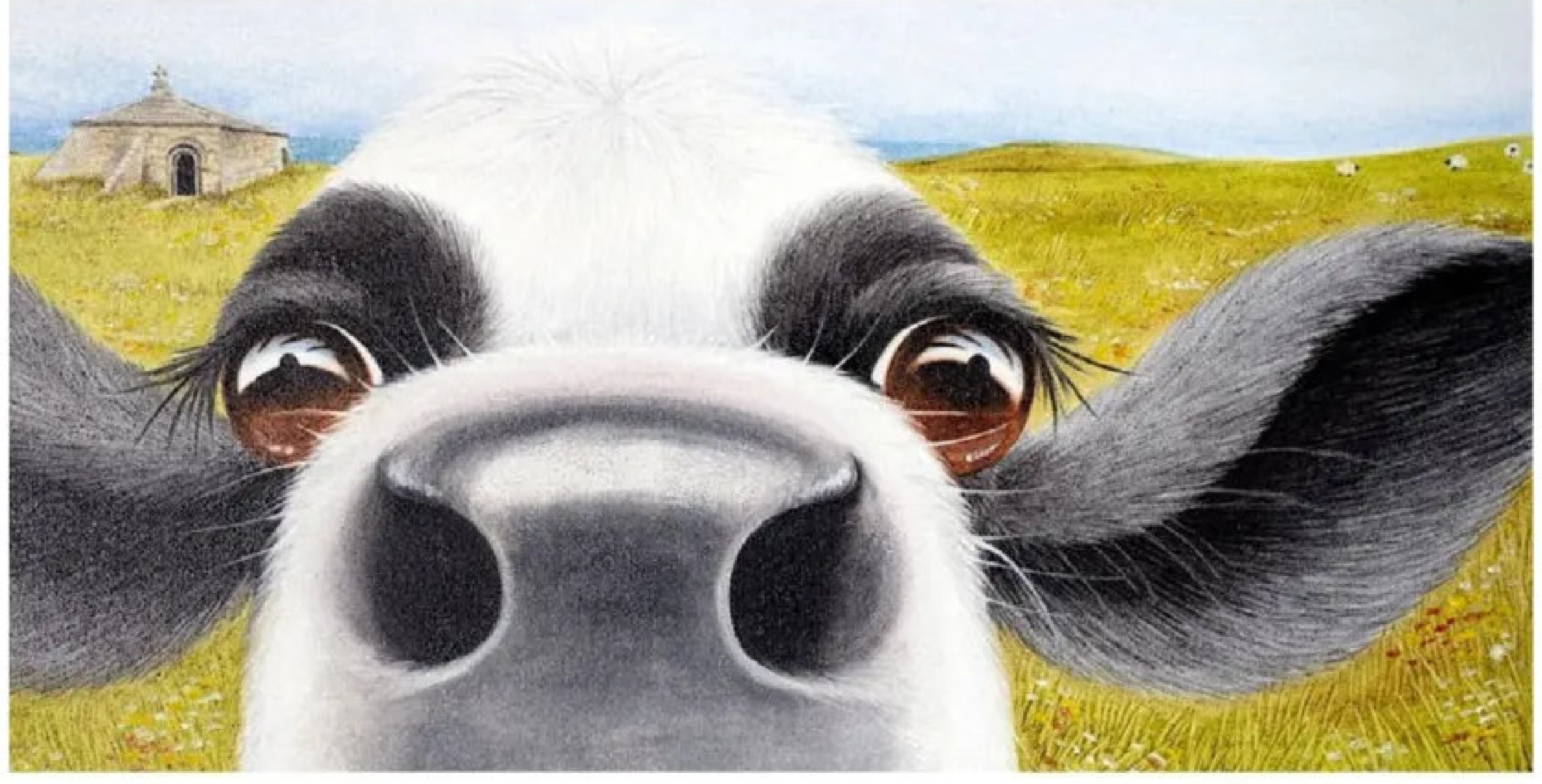
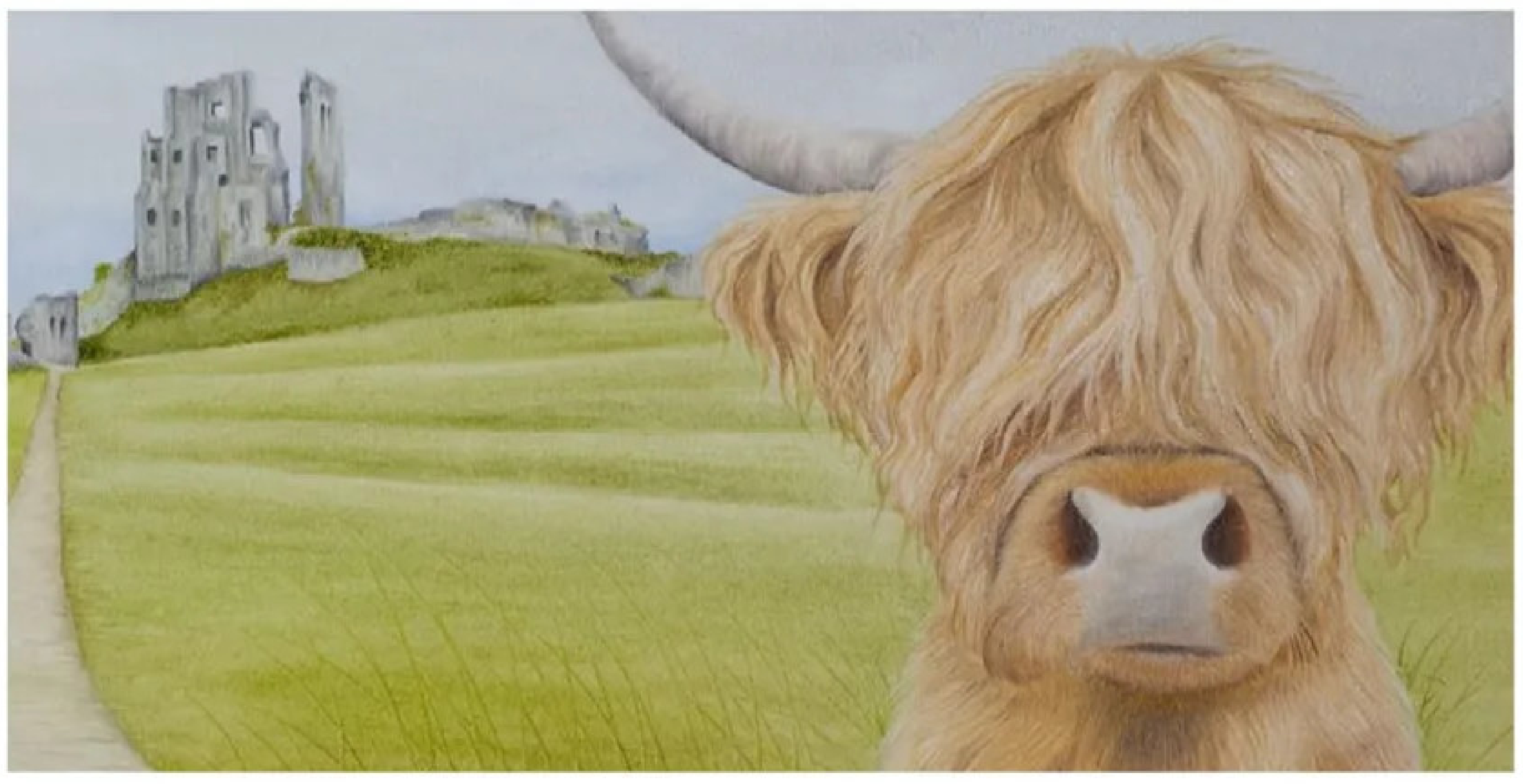






> "I worked my last day in the corporate world and haven't looked back since"

How has a career in the creative industry changed your life?
Running my own business has changed my life hugely. The satisfaction you get from working for yourself, being your own boss and making your own decisions is incredibly empowering, but it does come at a price! There have been times over the last five years where I have been accused of being a bit of a workaholic. It's very difficult to ever switch off when you're self-employed; there's always something to do, something to plan, constant lists and ideas swirling around in my mind! I have to admit, about three years in I was beginning to feel a little burnt out, missing out on a lot of social activities and precious family time, but I only had myself to blame – no one else was putting the pressure on me. So I made some adjustments, gave myself some rules and boundaries, and learnt how to delegate a little bit (I can be quite the control freak at times!), and balance began to be restored. I think being creative for a living has huge benefits to wellbeing, but I think you just need to be aware of not getting too engrossed and forgetting what else is important. It's a constant learning curve, that's for sure. I think it's incredibly important, no matter how busy you are or how long your to-do list is, to make time to look after yourself.

© Lucy Tidbury

Caroline Parrott

Caroline Parrott has been artistic ever since she can remember, coming from a family of creatives, and trying her hand at most things. She now works with anodised aluminium, which she hand prints and dyes in vibrant colours. She uses the colourful metal to make jewellery and home accents, occasionally embarking on bigger sculptural projects. Caroline tells us about the challenges and achievements she's encountered along the way.

Who or what inspired you to pursue a career in the creative industry?

My parents were artistic, as was my sister, so it was inevitable. Our parents always encouraged us to try new things and use different tools to create things.

After leaving school at 18, I headed straight into employment and worked on a magazine creating adverts. To satisfy my addiction to 'making', I enrolled on as many different creative workshops as I could possibly fit in, from beadwork to stone carving to charcoal burning. Eight years later, I signed up for an Applied Arts degree at Bournemouth University. I intended on becoming a teacher, but to help pay the bills while studying I got a part-time admin job at Walford Mill Crafts in Wimborne, Dorset. The contemporary crafts gallery revealed to me that there were so many more jobs out there in the arts world, ones I never knew existed, and with my experience of craft workshops and love for what I did, I soon got promoted to running their education and outreach programme, a job I continued to do for a further 11 years. I juggled this with selling my work, before going full-time self-employed in 2017. My inspiration came from all the people I worked with and encountered at the Mill; practical, creative people making beautiful work, teaching, exhibiting, doing the combination of pursuits that most makers do in order to work as a creative practitioner successfully.

A lot of your art reflects the natural world. How do your surroundings influence what you work on?

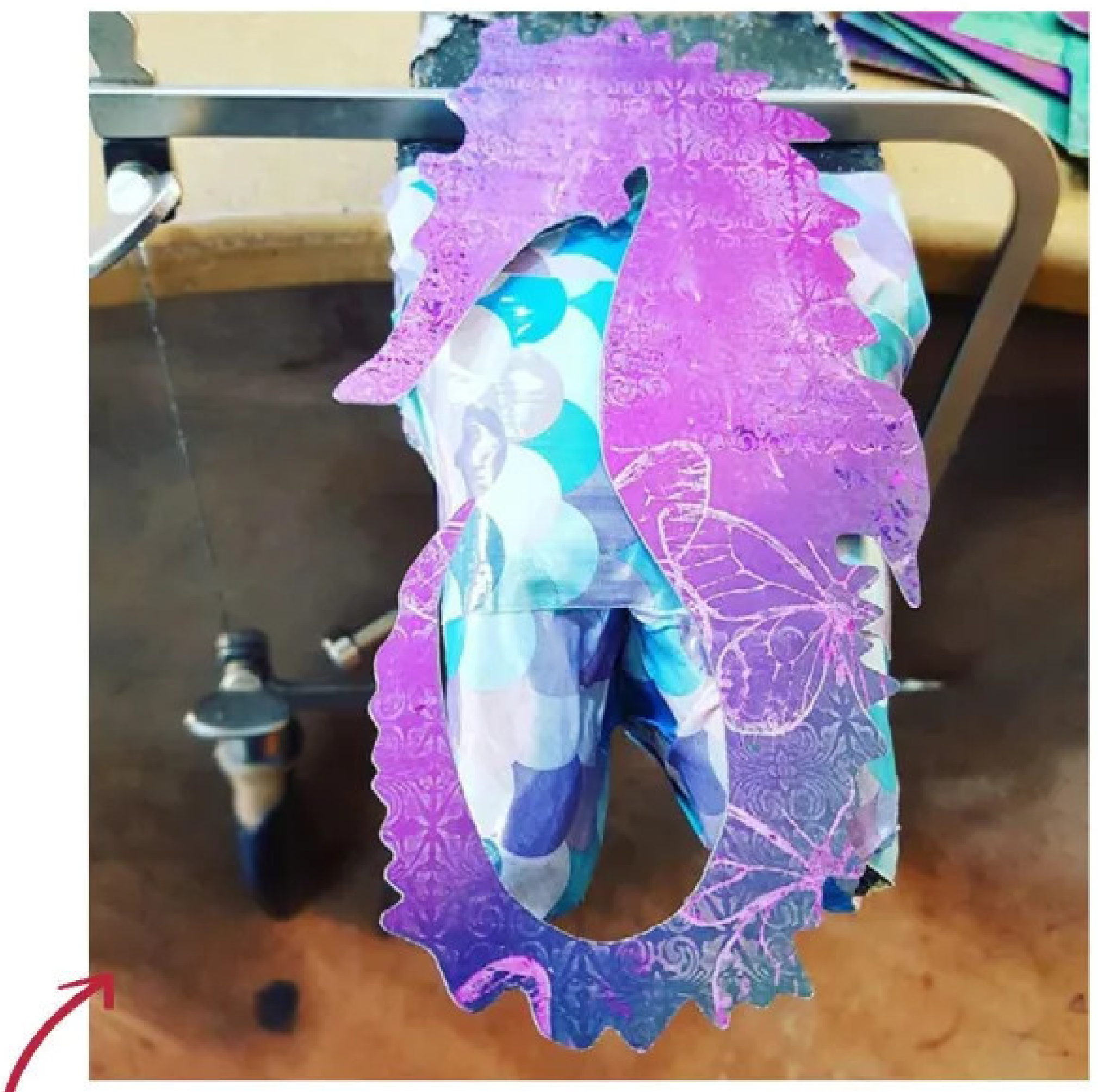
I'm mostly influenced by colours and natural forms, particularly flowers. The dyeing and printing part of my work happens in my garden shed, which houses all my essentials, including the dyes as well as the bigger cutting and drilling machinery. It's an eight-foot by six-foot shed, and I love it! Even in the rain and snow – it's my little haven. My shed is surrounded by trees and flowers, and the studio shop I share with a colleague at Walford Mill is next to a river in the courtyard. We both love flowers and they inspire our work, so outside we have an array of plants in pots, making our little studio look rather quaint, like a mini cottage. I'm also a big fan of the ocean. I surf, row and kayak, and this has influenced my work, not only with the colours I dye and the patterns I print but also wanting to create jewellery that can be worn on the beach, which includes semi-precious stones and beads I find on my travels, as well as drilled seaglass, shells and driftwood from the shore.

I'm passionate about reducing the use of plastics in my life. My packaging consists of small, round tins that can be reused in lunch boxes to carry snacks, and I'm looking for ways to cast with resin using recycled materials.

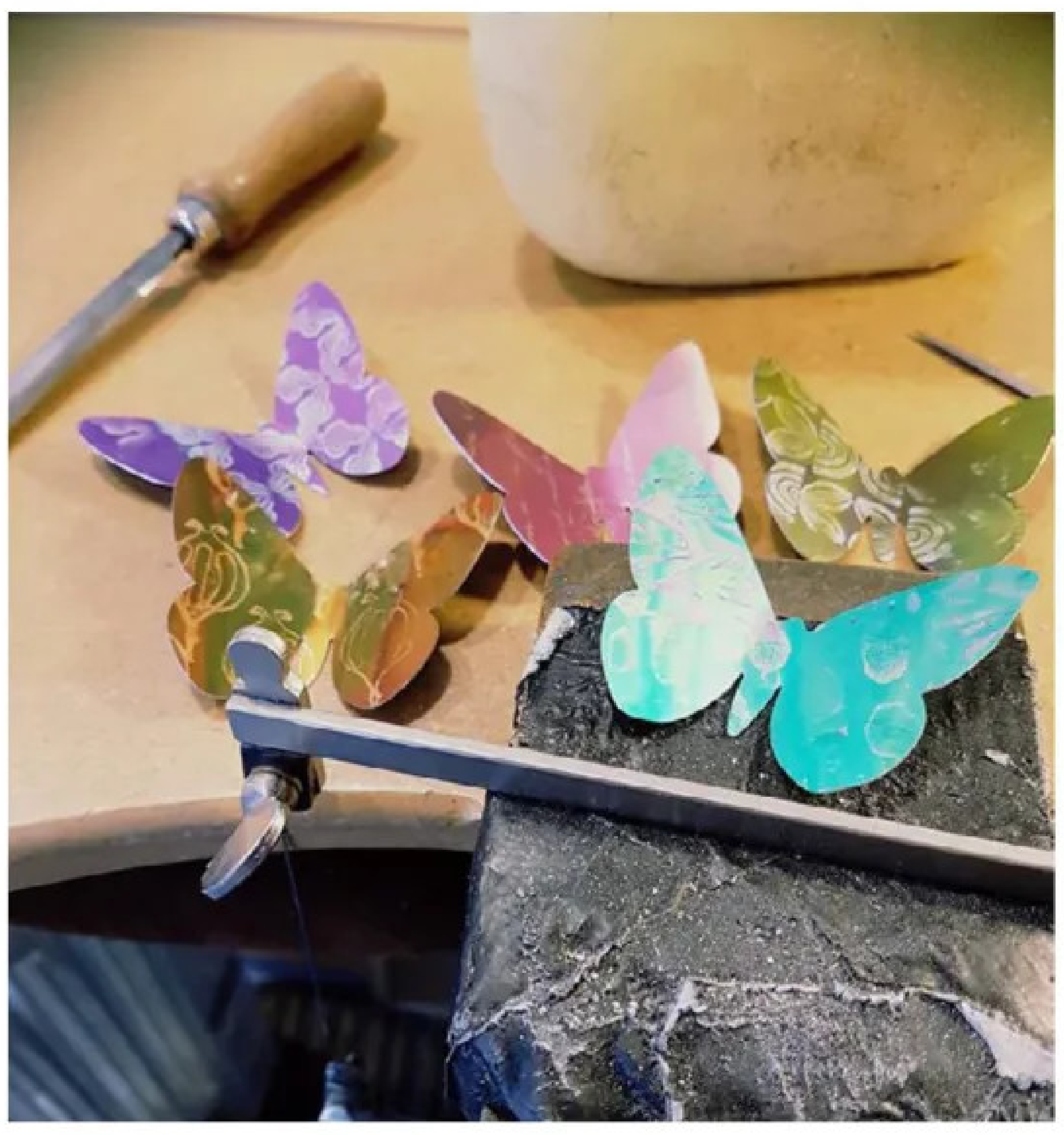
> "All people are good at some form of creative pursuit"

You carry out workshops and arts projects with adults and children – why do you feel the arts are so important?

Through my education work with Walford Mill, and separately as an artist, I've taught all ages for a number of years. The arts are hugely important for increasing confidence; there's always a young child who says they can't draw, and lacks the confidence to try. I love to help and encourage them to give it



One of the places Caroline creates her pieces is in her beloved shed, a place she calls "her little haven"



Get in touch

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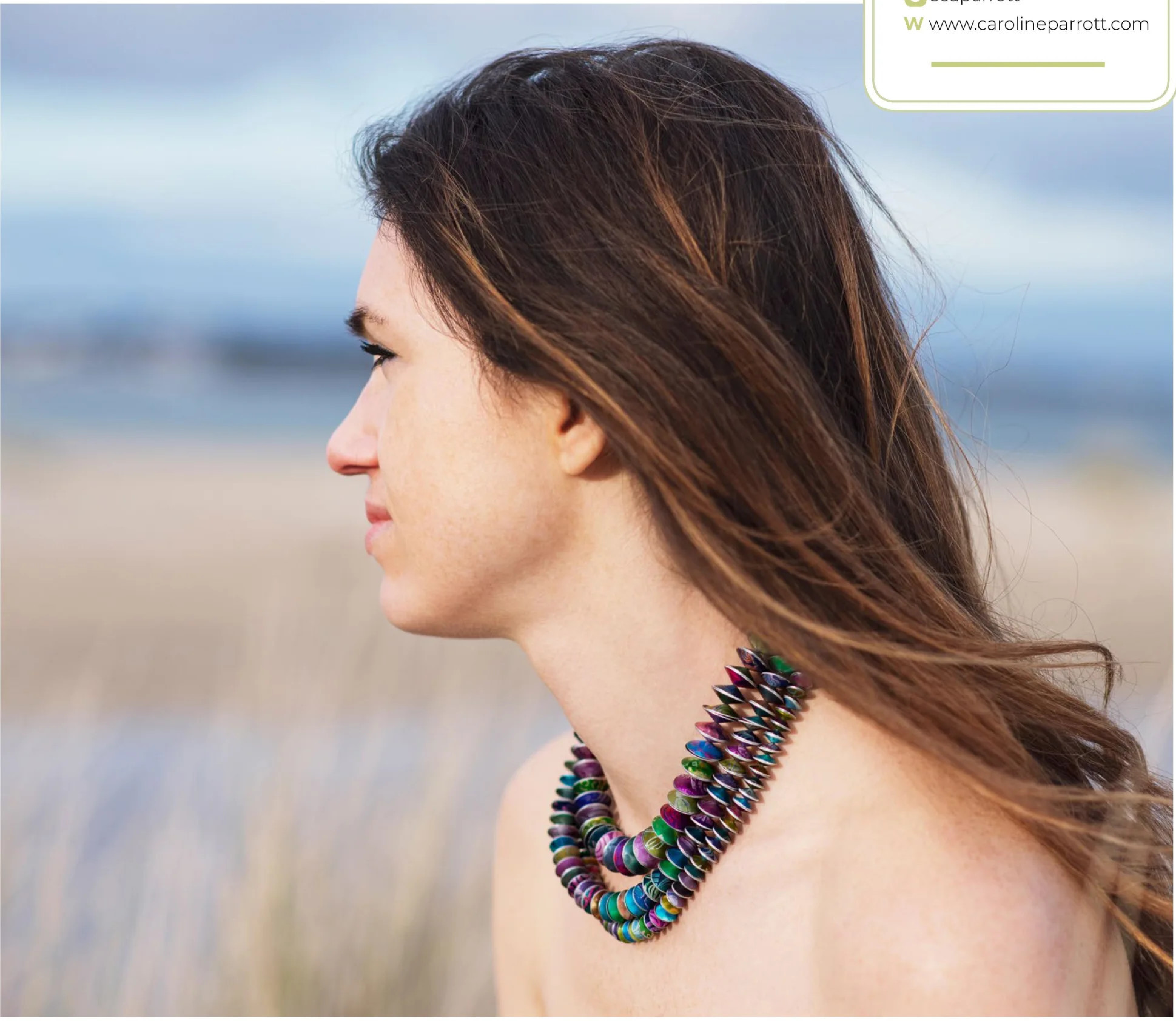

© Caroline Parrott

a go and not be shy or worried about their skills. I was never the best at art in my family – my sister was certainly better at drawing and painting – but I've always maintained that I had to find my thing and what I was good at. I think that's the case for everyone. All people are good at some form of creative pursuit, it's just a case of finding what it is.

Finding one thing that calms you and releases stress is so important; something that empties a racing mind, because you have to concentrate on it to make it work. It's great for a healthy mental balance, and if you do it with other people and can chat at the same time, it's even better.

What impact does a career in the creative industry have on your life?
I'm content, happy, calm and using my skills to make a living. Every day I get to go to my studio and make. I still do a happy dance when someone buys a piece of my work, and the feeling when I get money from the ATM that has been made solely by my own creativity is like nothing else. I have to be disciplined and work hard, but it's the most rewarding thing I have ever done, and I wouldn't change it for the world.

Carly Stalker

Carly Stalker did not take the decision lightly to quit her job, but the urge to have complete creative freedom and a healthy lifestyle to match became the motivation she needed to make change happen. Carly explains how she's now able to enjoy the small things in life again; to sit in the garden, to listen to her surroundings, and to rediscover herself as an artist.

Tell us about your background – have you always been creative and have you always worked for yourself?
I've always been creative, and have had quite a roller coaster experience with my love for art and the impact it can have on health and wellbeing. I studied art, design and photography throughout my school and college years, but it wasn't until I finished my foundation course that I found my love for graphic design and went on to study for my degree.

Leaving the creative bubble of university was a shock to the system, but I was lucky to have great opportunities open up to me. I was terrified, though, and convinced myself I wasn't good enough, so ran as fast as I could in the opposite direction and found myself unable and unwilling to be creative. The thing I loved doing was the very thing I was running away from. It's clear that both my mind and body just weren't ready for all the creative pressure I put upon myself in order to please others.

There's no point in being creative if there's no enjoyment in it. With this in mind, I began building my confidence and got my first job as an artworker for a magazine publisher. I then took a promotion as a marketing design manager and photography stylist for a craft company, which I loved, but it got to the point where work was having an impact on my own wellbeing, and that spark of excitement and freedom I once felt for the creative process had vanished.

It's essential to find a balance between work and home life, which is easier said than done. Art and creativity can have such a powerful impact on one's mental health and wellbeing. I soon realised that the day-to-day grind of office life had taken its toll, and so change was needed and Roo-tid was launched!

Your designs tend to be related to nature and wildlife – what is it about these things that inspires you?
Running a business had always been a goal. I wanted to do something I loved while sustaining a healthy lifestyle.

With the New Forest on my doorstep and my garden/office backing onto woodlands, it's a vast contrast to my previous town surroundings.

My husband and I spent months ripping out our first home, DIYing until we never wanted to see another paint brush again. Yet every one of these days we were visited by at least one of the furry 'neighbours' of the animal kind! Out came the camera and I started snapping away, until each visitor became a personality. 'Mr Badger was walking down the garden path last night', 'Mr Blue Tit was attacking his reflection in the windows today', 'Mr Squirrel is eating the bird food again!' And, just like that, everything started to come together. Without the pressure of office life and designing to someone else's needs and wants, I could truly open my eyes and mind to my surroundings and felt the creative freedom pouring out of me.

The nature and wildlife that surrounds me is the main body and structure of the business. Not only is it the subject matter of each illustration, but it has

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also become a way of life. Regular forest adventures where I collect inspirational materials, daily walks to refresh the mind, and night vision camera activities to capture our furry friends in action.

My creative life no longer consumes me but it is now part of me. I have total control over how it makes me feel and what I get out of each drawing session. I can lose myself and feel the frowns on my forehead release and my breathing settle. It's a way of expressing who I am as an artist but also who I've become as an individual, someone in touch with nature and all it has to offer on a daily basis.

For me, creativity is like the feeling you get after a hard workout or a long run. My body feels happy, content and revitalised, excited for the day ahead, and my mind thankful for the time to unwind, slow down and relax. Creativity doesn't just have to be about the final stages of physically executing something – yes it's enjoyable to see a sketch come to life, but my creative process is also about visiting places, taking photos, collecting materials, going for walks, reading poems and daydreaming while watching the clouds float by! They're all moments where the mind can wander and interpret its surroundings into something else – a touch, a smell, a sound.

Every aspect of my creative process is about enjoyment; surrounding myself with things I love that my mind and body react positively to, but most importantly to remember to take each moment as it comes, to stay Roo-tid and remain grounded like our natural surroundings.

My bright and bold coloured illustrations bring a modern twist to an otherwise traditional country-style theme and ultimately enable me to live the best life I can. Creative processes really can offer life-changing journeys; you just have to be willing to 'let go' a little!

You use eco-friendly toners on papers originating from responsibly managed forests – why is this important to you?

I wanted to be as environmentally friendly as I possibly could. The ink used for both my paper and fabric products are eco-friendly and the manufacturers go to great lengths to ensure the paper is run through a chemical-free printer and that the chemicals used for the fabric cleaning process are environmentally safe.

Manufacturing details like this and sourcing recycled papers originating from responsibly managed forests are key to my brand, and help play a part in a crucial time for our planet's wellbeing.

I currently fold my fabric products and tie with jute with a recycled tag, while my cards and prints are packaged in biodegradable cello slips, which can then be carried away in brown paper bags.

Not only do I wish for Roo-tid to be as environmentally friendly as possible but I am also passionate to create a business and a brand that supports fellow UK manufacturers and so all my current products are produced here in the UK. This is something I am very proud of, as it is extremely tough when competing with competitors that have much lower cost prices due to sourcing abroad.

© Carly Stalker

Ready, steady, bake!

Three simple recipes for flapjacks, cheese twists and wholemeal bread

You will need

* 200g/7oz/1 cup light muscovado sugar
* 200g/7oz/ 2 sticks unsalted butter
* 5 tbsp golden syrup
* 5 tbsp honey
* 400g/14oz/4½ cups porridge oats
* 1 tbsp plain flour
* 1 tsp vanilla extract
* 2-3 cooking apples, peeled, cored and chopped finely
* 115g/4oz/¾ cup saltanas

Apple flapjacks

Sweet, chewy and deliciously soft

Prep time: 20 mins **Baking time:** 30 mins **Servings:** 12-20

METHOD:

To begin, preheat the oven to 150°C/300°F/Gas mark 2 and line a large baking tray with greaseproof paper. Even though you're using greaseproof paper, it's a good idea to butter the paper a little as well, to ensure nothing sticks.

COMBINE THE INGREDIENTS

First, tip the oats and vanilla extract into a large bowl and mix with a wooden spoon.

Next, melt the butter in a saucepan. The heat should be kept nice and low as you don't want to burn the butter. Keep stirring it until it has melted. Slowly add the sugar, the syrup and the honey. Stir gently until it has dissolved into a paste with a honey-like consistency.

Take the butter mixture off the hob and pour gently over the oats. This is the point to add in the apple and sultanas. If you want classic plain flapjacks simply leave the apple and sultanas out. Or get even more creative and substitute them for a handful of chocolate chips, nuts, or glacé cherries.

BAKING THE FLAPJACKS

Tip the mixture into the greased tray and pat it down into a solid shape. Ideally, it should be about an inch thick, but the thinner it is, the less time you'll need to cook it for.

Bake for 30-40 minutes on a middle shelf. You can tell when a flapjack is done because it turns a lovely golden brown.

When the flapjack is ready, leave it to cool in the tray for ten minutes, then divide up into squares or slices. The flapjack should have a slight crunch to the outer layer, but still be soft and pliable in the centre. Leave to cool before eating, as the sugary oats retain the heat.

AND FOR CHOCOHOLICS

Dark or milk chocolate chips are a delicious addition to the recipe; just throw in a few handfuls to the recipe and it'll give the regular oaty taste a richer depth to off-set the light sweetness of the honey. Another way to get a chocolatey hit with your flapjacks is to melt chocolate in a bain-marie and dip the cooked squares of flapjack in, corner-first.

You will need

- 200g/7oz/1¾ cup self-raising/cake flour
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper
- ½ tsp paprika
- 125g/4oz/1 stick chilled butter
- 125g/4oz/½ cup Gran Padano cheese
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 20g/¾oz/1½ tbsp poppy seeds

Cheese twists

These make perfect snacks but are also great with soup

Prep time: 30 mins **Baking time:** 18 mins **Servings:** 12

METHOD:
Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas mark 4. Sieve the flour into a large bowl, dice the butter and add to the flour along with the cayenne pepper and paprika.

MAKE BREADCRUMBS
Work the mixture with your fingers by pinching the butter cubes and rubbing them until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Add the cheese and stir until everything is well combined.

Separate the yolk and the white of one of the eggs. Put the bowl with the egg white aside and add the yolk, plus the entire second egg, to the flour and cheese mixture.

Add the mustard to this and stir with a wooden spoon until the mixture sticks together. Push the mixture together with your hands, so it resembles a dough.

CUT THE SHAPES
Sprinkle a clean, dry surface with flour. Tip the dough onto this and then knead lightly for 30 seconds. Cover (don't wrap) the dough in plastic wrap and leave in a cool place for 30 minutes.

Cut the dough into 24 equal portions. The best way to do this is to make it into a small rectangle shape (it doesn't matter how tall or wide), cut the rectangle in half, and then each half in half, then halve each piece again and finally cut the eight pieces each into three equal portions.

Using your flat hand and the floured surface (top up if necessary), roll each of the 24 pieces into 8cm/3in long strips.

Get two of the strips, pinch the top of each together, and then twist them. When they are twisted, pinch the two remaining ends together and place on a baking tray lined with foil. Repeat until you have 12 twists, making sure that the twists are evenly spaced out.

Whisk the egg white that was put aside earlier and then brush a small amount all over each twist.

Now sprinkle the poppy seeds over the twists. Place on the middle shelf of the preheated oven for 18-20 minutes or until golden brown.

You will need

- * 500g/17½oz/4 cups strong wholemeal bread flour
- * 7g/½ tsp dried yeast
- * 10g/¾ tsp table salt
- * 1 tbsp (15ml) olive oil
- * 350ml/12fl oz warm water

Basic wholemeal loaf

Create a rustic wholemeal loaf with ease

Prep time: 1 hour 20 mins **Baking time:** 30 mins **Servings:** 8

METHOD:

Place the flour, dried yeast and salt in a large bowl. Try not to let the yeast and salt touch at this stage as the salt will kill the yeast.

Measure out the water and add the olive oil. Pour this into the bowl along with your other ingredients.

Slowly bring the mix together with your hands until a rough dough is formed. Scrape out the bowl onto a lightly floured work surface.

KNEAD THE MIXTURE

Knead the bread by pushing away part of the dough with the base of your hand then pulling it back in order to stretch it. Do this until the dough is smooth and satiny – this will take around 10 minutes.

Roll into a ball and place into a large, clean, lightly oiled bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Leave in a warm place for 45 minutes to an hour or until the dough has doubled in size.

Scrape the dough onto your work surface and push the air out of the dough by pushing your fingers into it and creating a circle with the dough.

Shape the loaf by rolling the dough into a tight round ball and sprinkle the top with flour or oats.

BAKE AND EAT

Place on a baking tray with the seam of the dough on the bottom. Leave in a warm place to rise for 30 minutes. While the dough is rising, preheat the oven to 250°C/475°F/Gas mark 10 or its highest setting.

Place on the middle shelf of your oven and bake for 10 minutes then turn your oven down to 180°C/350°F/Gas mark 4 and bake for a further 20 minutes. Your loaf is fully baked when it has a well-browned crust and sounds hollow when tapped on the bottom of it.

Leave on a wire rack until it has completely cooled and enjoy!

FULL OF FLAVOUR

For extra flavour and texture, try adding a handful of mixed seeds into your dough before adding the water. You can also top your loaf with some seeds to give it a beautifully rustic appearance.

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Finish

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Finish

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> moment you’ll ever
> really have. Mindfulness is about
> waking up to this”

Mark Williams

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> require that we
> **be the best,**
> only that we try
> **our best"**

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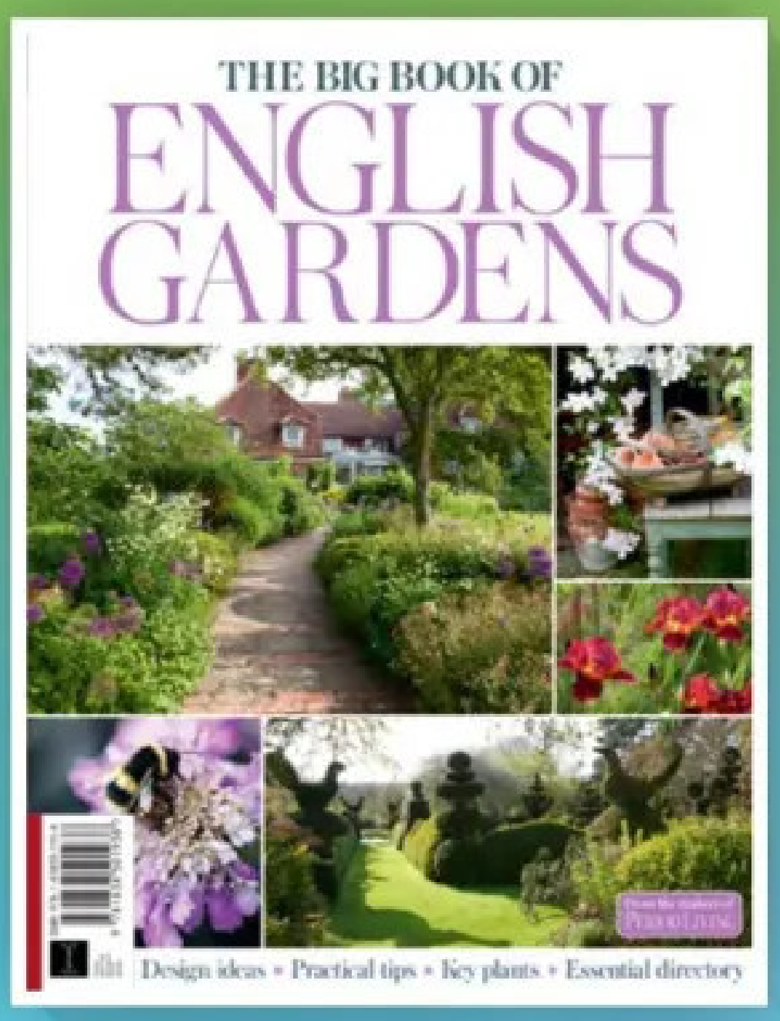
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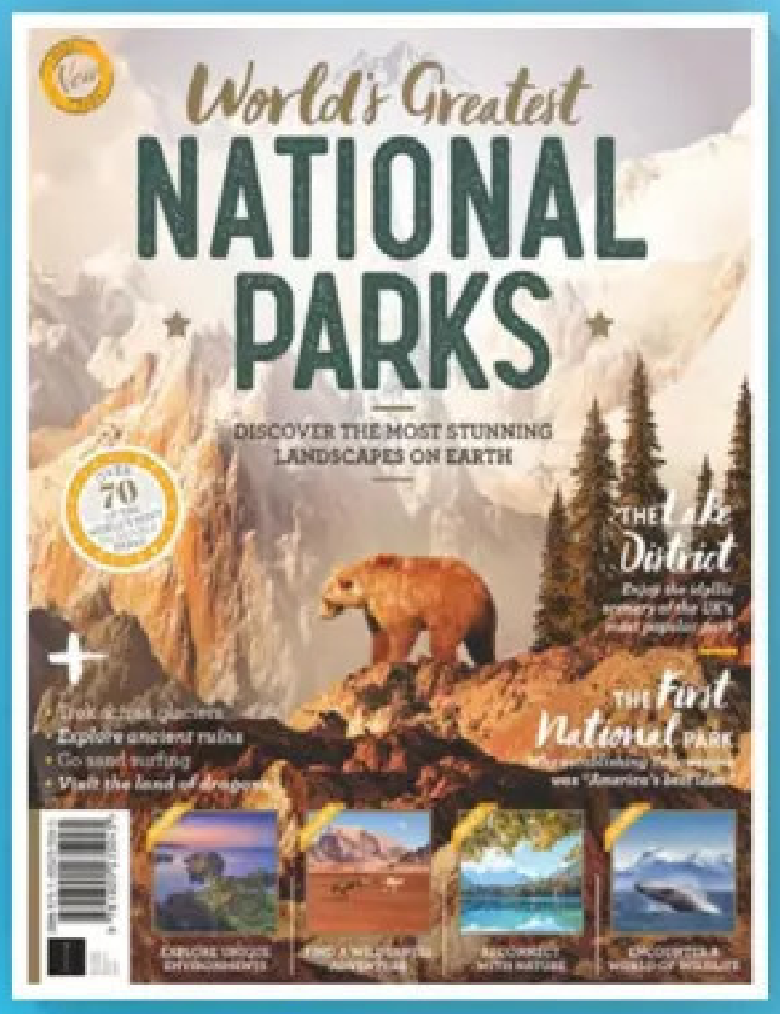
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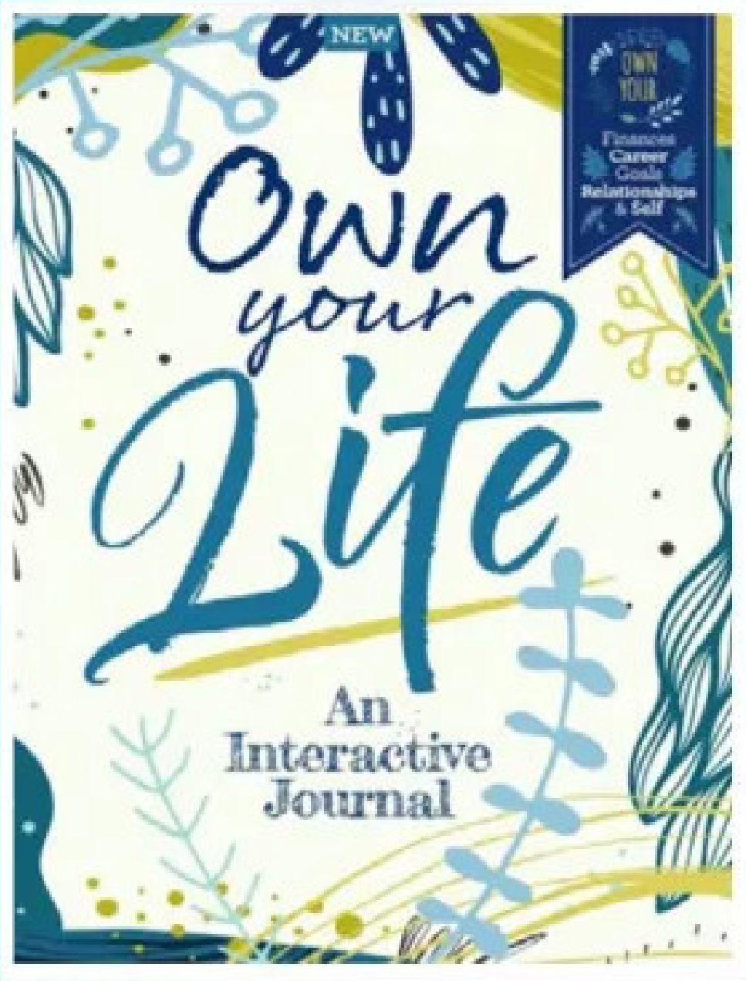
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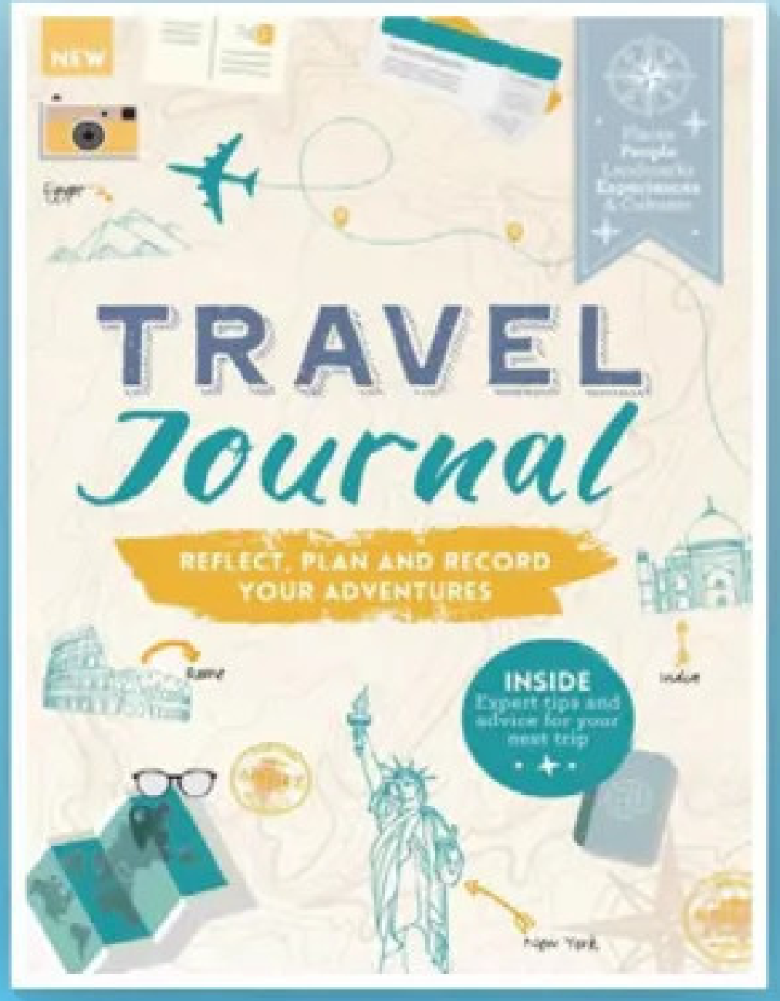
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